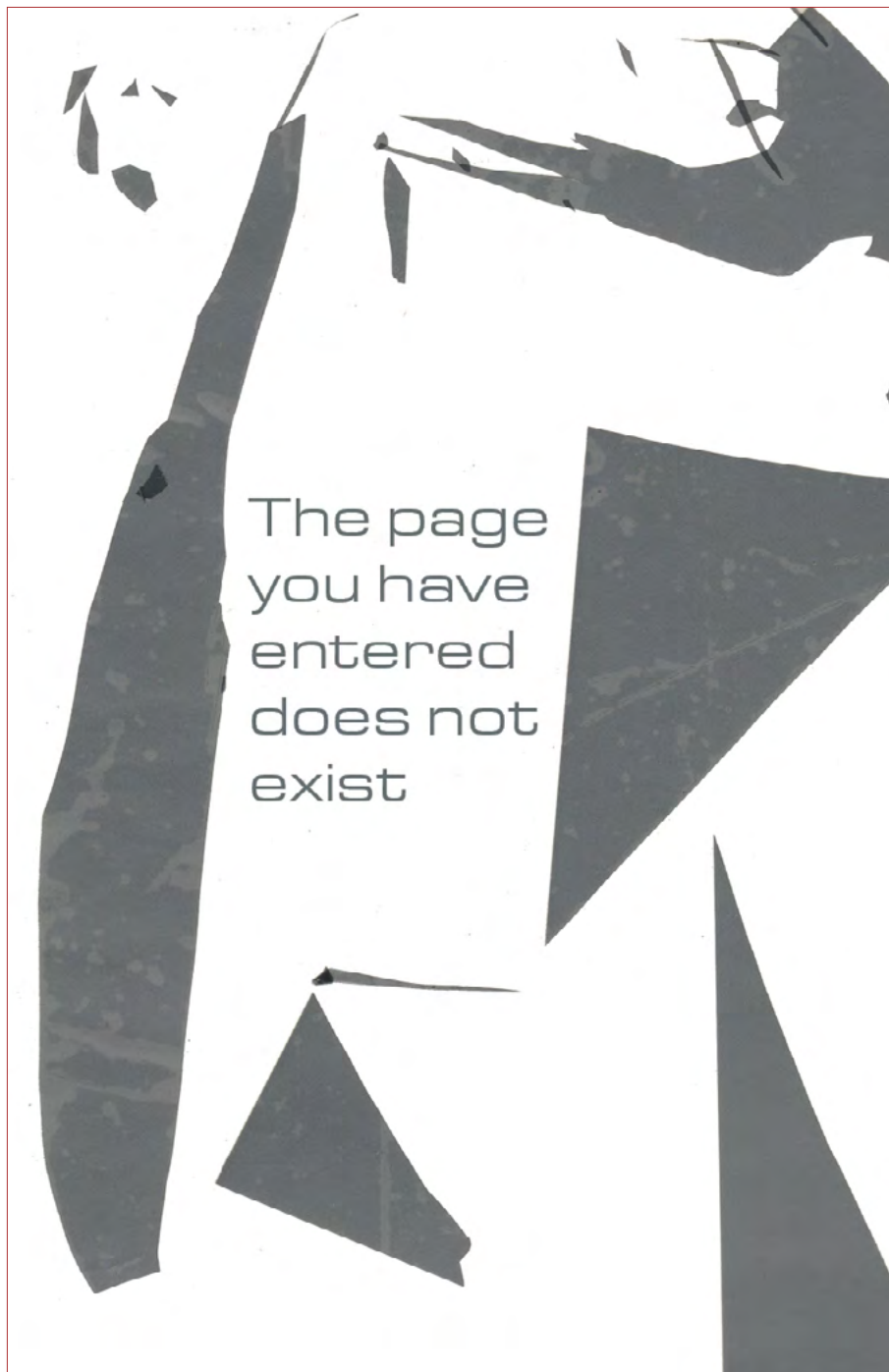


TEXT | PAGE | ART

Editor: Caren Florance





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INTRODUCTION

Caren Florance

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INTRODUCTION: TEXT | PAGE | ART

Caren Florance

This issue's callout asked for explorations and interactions of page and art in a digital format, and used a quote from Australian poet and art critic Gary Catalano (1947–2002):

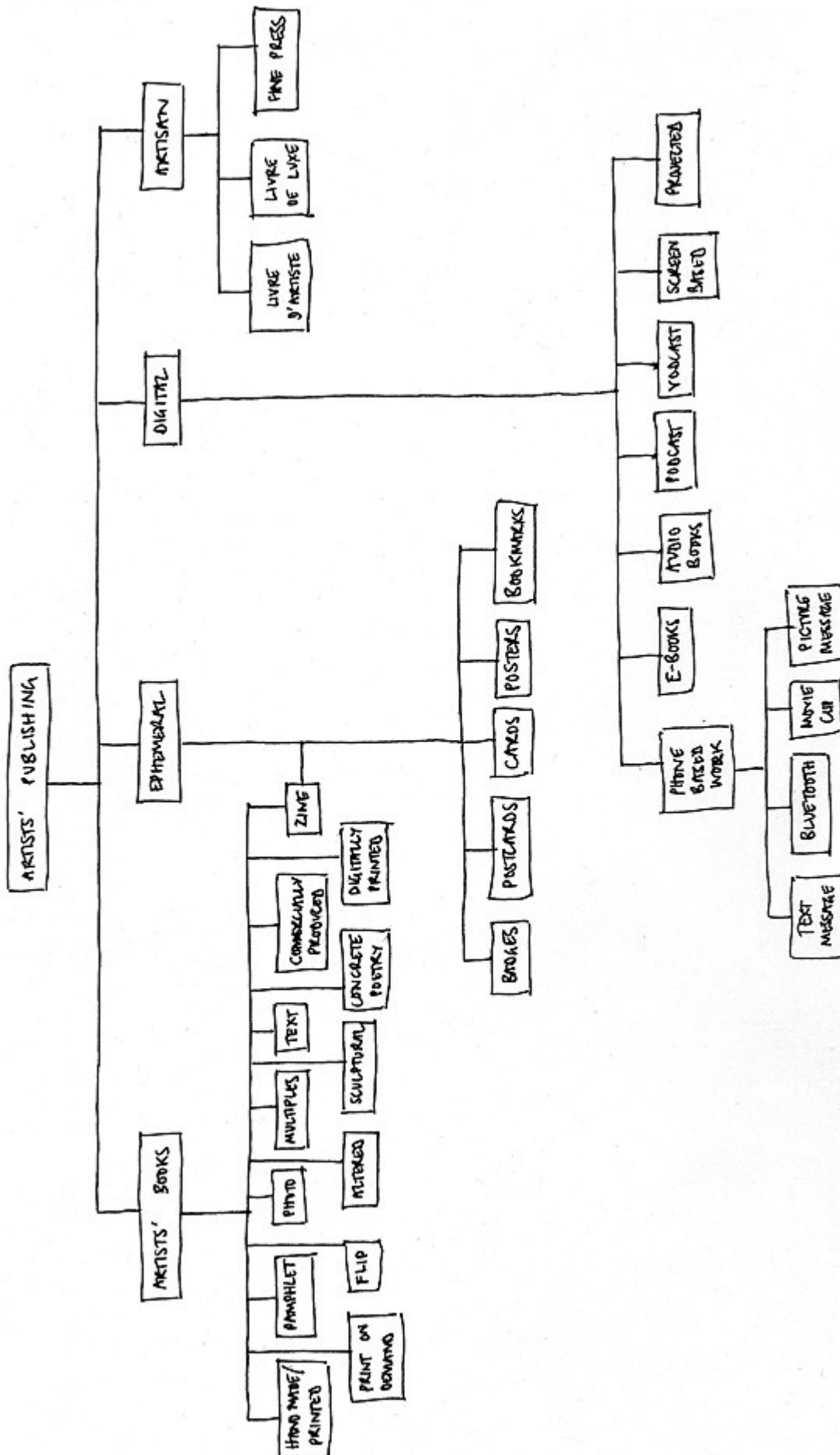
If the fact that many visual artists now make books can be taken as a sign that the visual arts are becoming more literary in their forms, and, perhaps, in their aspirations, then the converse could also be said of much advanced and ambitious literature in the past twenty years. Just as visual artists have added words and discursive texts to their repertory of forms, so many writers have come to use visual devices as an essential element of their work. (1983).

He was, of course, writing on the cusp, just before the desktop computer transformed *everything* and moved us quickly into an age of rapid technological change. I posed the question, 'Contemporary independent creative publishing is very different to that around the time of Catalano's survey. Or is it?' Catalano was writing about what was contemporary in his time: artists who took publishing into their own hands, rebelling against the formality of offset printing and private press letterpress by using cheap processes: Ronograph, photocopiers, screenprint. Apart from the last process the outcomes were, by economic necessity, black & white and stapled (the industry term is 'saddle-stitched'). Many of the books he is investigating as 'artist's books' would be called 'zines' now, and sitting on the lower rungs of what has become a large, layered taxonomy of creative publishing. UK artist book researchers Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden once devised a basic taxonomy (1) and invited artists from around the world to adjust and add to it, which resulted in a fascinating and complex web of different names for publishing formats (Bodman & Sowden 2010).

As Bodman and Sowden demonstrated, artist books are the broadest, most nebulous, most flexible form of creative publishing. Interestingly, many of the artist books made at the rise of the internet were exploring the notion that the physical book was dead by the hand of the computer, but these days it is flourishing, at least in terms of recreational reading. Sarah Bodman is responding to that with her invited contribution, sharing stories from a 13-year project that grew from a two-person artist book collaboration 'into an annual, international, participatory celebration of reading and creative making'. We have other explorations that demonstrate the artist book as research vessel: Angela Gardner and Gwenn Tasker share their collaborative artist book that started with a trip to the circus. Artist Clyde McGill takes us walking along rivers, his artist book texts reproduced here as visual poetry. Ella Morrison interrogates textual presence in the artist books of the late Petr Herel, and Mona Soleymani takes us into the issues of artist book conservation and care.

Another component of the call-out was an invitation to contribute zine-style publications that readers could download, print and compile for themselves, to allow this to be a hybrid digital/print issue of *Axon: Creative Explorations* and to encourage some good old-fashioned kitchen-table creativity. We have a great selection. Nicci Haynes articulates the Zen of zine-making in her introduction to 'Run as fast as you can':

reproducing it [as a multiple] becomes expensive unless you have access to a free photocopier, and part of the ethos of zines is that they are sold cheaply. They are made for love, not for profit, an attribute that appeals to me, since to spend a lot



1 Bodman & Sowden, 2010. The initial Abtree chart.

of time making a thing that's not part of any commercial imperative feels like an act of defiance against a cultural backdrop of financial value as a primary metric. At Melbourne's Sticky Institute, a shop and resource devoted entirely to zines, anything above \$10 is considered pricey. There is no advertising in the zine world. You can't go viral with a zine.

We have one contribution for which I recommend access to a photocopier rather than a home printer: a 44-page black & white [collaborative group zine](#) made to 'capture, celebrate and complicate' the May 2022 Sydney University staff strikes. It typifies classic DIY media: raw, rough, strident, and full of 'collective struggle and solidarity', including poems that were read aloud on the picket lines. I'm jumping out of the zine category for a moment to also recommend the poetry-as-protest-political banners made and contextualised by [Astra Papachristodoulou](#), which would have been welcomed with open arms at the USyd picket lines.

Other zines are gentler: Architect and visual poet [Alex Selenitsch](#) presents us with *Assembly Lines*, a visual sequence inspired by a coffee conversation that connects an idea back to medieval scribe practices, 'a modern projection onto an imagined hand-drawn past'. We had different ideas about its presentation: he saw it as a straight single-page progression, whereas I wanted to see it move through pages. Selenitsch once called the artist book 'a living, changing discipline' (2008), so I have presented his idea both ways, and leave it to you to decide. Another zine is made by a poet who started painting ([Lizz Murphy](#)), and my own [zine](#) shares a response to the broken promises of internet stability and its effect upon my artist book history research. Each booklet has print instructions on their introductory pages, and an added extra is a zine-format tutorial if you feel inspired to create one for yourself, at the end of this introduction.

COVID-19 echoes through this issue, impossible to ignore after the upheaval of the past few years. Still with the zines, [Fred & Flo \(& the Germbutter Collective\)](#) presents a serious/fun account of the second year of Australian pandemic response, and an invited contribution from the US [Quarantine Public Library](#) shows the value of a collective DIY project for community morale. Their efforts inspired the downloadable publication component of this issue.

Some of the essays also situate themselves as responses to the disrupted first years of this decade. [Marian Crawford](#) asks 'Could making an artwork suggest a way to navigate the 2020s, these last three years, and perhaps support a re-alignment of my barricaded sensibilities as an artist and as a citizen of the world? Could I turn from defence to embrace?' [Rees Quilford](#) roots his lyrical exploration of place with the realisation that 'the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic have come to be associated with unexpected creativity.'

Experimental text has a long relationship with the page, and also with art. Writers have long used constraints as a pathway to experimental writing. [Vahri McKenzie's](#) piece, 'I think things are precious', is inspired by the FLUXUS movement, while the international mail art project 'Postcards to Perec', [Linda Parr](#) tells us, is a response to the imaginary postcard texts written by OULIPO writer George Perec. For those within reach, the Sydney exhibition of this project opens in late July 2023.

Visual poetry is another robust text / art / page hybrid, long embraced by visual artists and poets. The vispo poets featured here have taken full advantage of the backlit screen of your computer or device in terms of colour and impact. Start with [Toby Fitch's](#) essay to get historical context as well as his own vibrant contemporary creations, then click over to [CE Wallace](#) and finally end with [K Roberts](#), who has made another COVID-19 response, this time a single colour image.

Then we have the more traditional text/art ekphrastic interaction, one being [Peter Robinson's poetic response to Andrew McDonald's vibrant artwork](#), and the other by [Ellis-Wolseley-Kane](#), which adds a Brodie Ellis sound piece to the heady mix of Paul Kane's writing and John Wolsoley's visual field notes, to extend our parameters even further.

I deliberately placed [Nein Schwartz's](#) memoir-essay at the end. It was written 24 years ago and never published before now. I remember watching her make the artwork that inspired the essay so I'm delighted to find that it feels fresh after this expanse of time. I hope it lingers in your mind too.

Many thanks to all the contributors and especially to Distinguished Professor Jen Webb for her support, guidance and enthusiasm for this issue.

Works Cited

Bodman S & T Sowden 2010 *A Manifesto for the Book*, Bristol, UK, Impact Press, The Centre for Fine Print Research

Catalano G 1983 *The Bandaged Image: A study of Australian artists' books*, pp 11–12 Sydney, Hale & Iremonger

Selenitsch A 2008 *Australian Artists Books*, p 5 ACT, National Gallery of Australia

Cover details

Caren Florance, cover of *404: The page you have entered does not exist* (2023), a downloadable zine available in this issue.

DIY Zine Booklet (following pages)

The next 2 pages is a DIY pamphlet on zine production. It should be printed out back to back on A4 paper (LONG-edge double-sided printer setting) and then folded in half (dotted line) then half again (dashed line), Once folded, the dashed fold can be cut or slit to make a booklet. It explains the concept of imposition, shows alternative formats and gives choices of binding.

About the author

Caren Florance is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the University of Canberra (UC) Centre for Creative and Cultural Research. She was a technical officer for the ANU Edition + Artist Book Studio, and taught Book Arts and Letterpress in the ANU Printmedia & Drawing Workshop for almost two decades. She also taught Typography for UC Visual Communications. Her practice-led UC doctorate explored the overlaps of visual poetry, text art and artist books through material collaboration with poets and artists. She is active in the Australian artist book community, and has won a Fremantle Print Award and the Northern Beaches Libraries Artist Book award, and has been shortlisted for the Libris Award and the 66th Blake Prize. She has been collected by national and international collections, mostly libraries, including the British Library and the National Library of Australia. She is an international peer reviewer for the UK journal *The Blue Notebook* (University of the West of England). In 2019 Cordite Books commissioned and published her visual poetry volume *Lost in Case*, which was shortlisted for the ASAL Mary Gilmore Award. She lives in Bega NSW, deep in the Yuin Nation.

NB: WHITE EDGES. Every printer and every photocopier leaves white space around the edge of the page. It can be up to 5mm wide. Design your zine accordingly. You can print on coloured paper, but if you work with white paper and want a bleed edge (where the colour goes off the paper), you will need to print larger and trim/crop your paper down to the size you want. This will affect your folds, so plan accordingly. **Most people just accept the white edge as a necessary evil of photocopy zines.**

ALWAYS PRINT A TEST COPY BEFORE COMMITTING TO PRINTING MULTIPLES!

PHOTOCOPY the pages back to back with the setting at 1 sided => 2-sided and LEFT EDGE bind. Some copiers may need the every second page turned 180° alternately when fed into the copier.

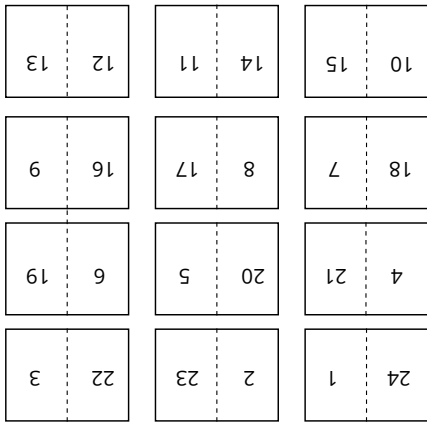
1. Pick out the page format you want to work with (the next few pages offer some choices).
2. Make a MAQUETTE of it, either to scale or smaller: make all the folds, so that it looks like the desired format, then number all the pages in order with a pencil.
3. Unfold it and look at what you have. You will see which pages need to face each other, what needs to be upside-down, and what needs to be on the other side. See the next page for an example.
4. The maquette is your map to follow. Now you can go ahead and make your zine, according to its page layout demands.



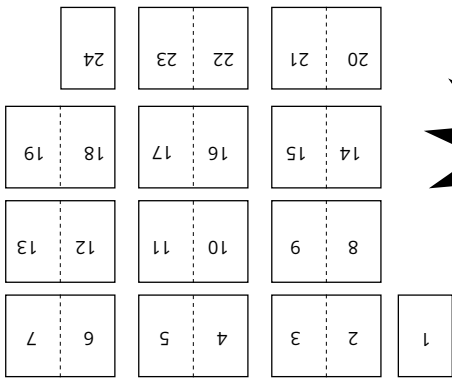
Whether you print your zine out on your own printer, or make a hand-generated matrix and photocopy it, you still have to wrap your brain around reproducing your zine pages in the correct order. Some layout software will generate a booklet for you, but it is super-RADICAL to work out page imposition for yourself, and if you're working by hand, it should be your first step.

IMPOSITION (or, PRINTER-FU)

As you can see, the first and last page, are set up together, and the numbers progress up and down with the even numbers on the left and the odd on the right. When they meet, it's the centre spread.

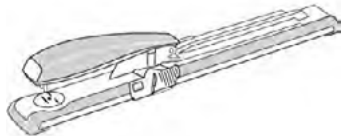


This is the order in which the reader will view the pages. This is the order in which the pages need to be set up for double-sided photocopying or printing. You must have a number of pages divisible by 4.



BOOKLET IMPOSITION EXAMPLE: 24pp (Booklet pages can be any multiple of FOUR)

BINDINGS



A long-armed **stapler** makes life really easy but you don't need to buy one unless you're making LOTS of zines. Often you can find one at a printery or even in the local library.

OR you can sew a stitch that was used before staplers were invented:

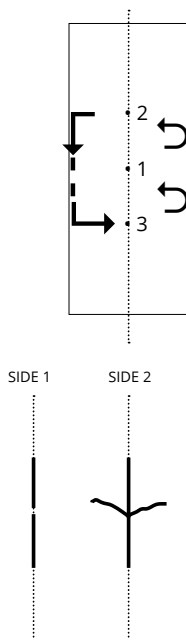
3-hole pamphlet stitch

Make three holes on the fold (needle or awl). The group of three can be anywhere on the spine and any distance apart.

If you want to finish the knot on the outside, start on the outside (or vice versa).

1. Sew through hole 1, leaving enough thread to tie off.
2. Go through hole 2.
3. Go all the way down to hole 3
4. Come back through the centre (hole 1), trying not to sew through the existing thread, and come out on the other side of the long stitch.
5. Tie a square/reef knot over the top of the long stitch (left over right, right over left).

NB: Don't pull your thread hard against the paper, it will tear. Always gently tighten the thread along the spine, from the direction of pulling. Check for loops of spare thread.



8-page No-frills Zine Handout

SOME ASSEMBLAGE REQUIRED

- ✓ Competency assured
- ✓ Empowering guaranteed

Caren Florance | | Ampersand Duck

* Your matrix can be any size, actually, as long as it can be scaled up or down to photocopy paper sizes.

THERE ARE NO RULES.

No matter how you produce it, or in what shape, the important thing is that a zine is a *small-run publication*: an actual thing that can be held in the hand and is not commercially published. Other than that,

✎ You can also lay out everything on a computer and print it out.

✂ Cutting: scissors, craft knife, etc

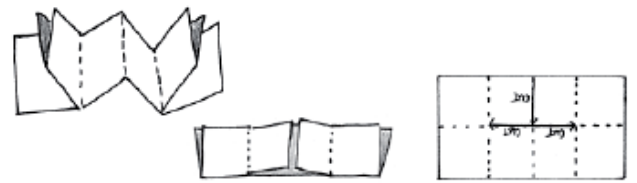
📖 Collage materials

✍ Writing & drawing supplies

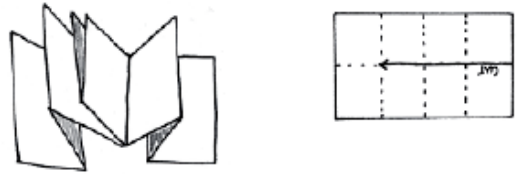
✂ Cutting: scissors, craft knife, etc

📄 Plain paper, in a size that works with a photocopier : A4, A3*

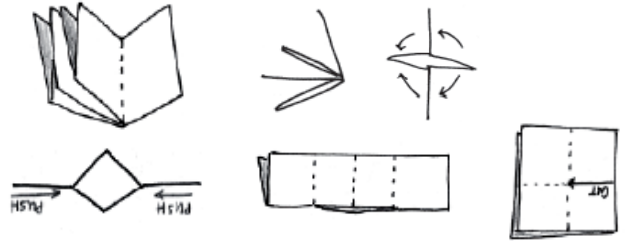
BASIC SUPPLIES



3. T-CUT FOLD

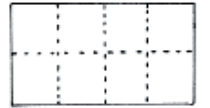


2. CENTRE CUT FOLD



1. CLASSIC ZINE FOLD

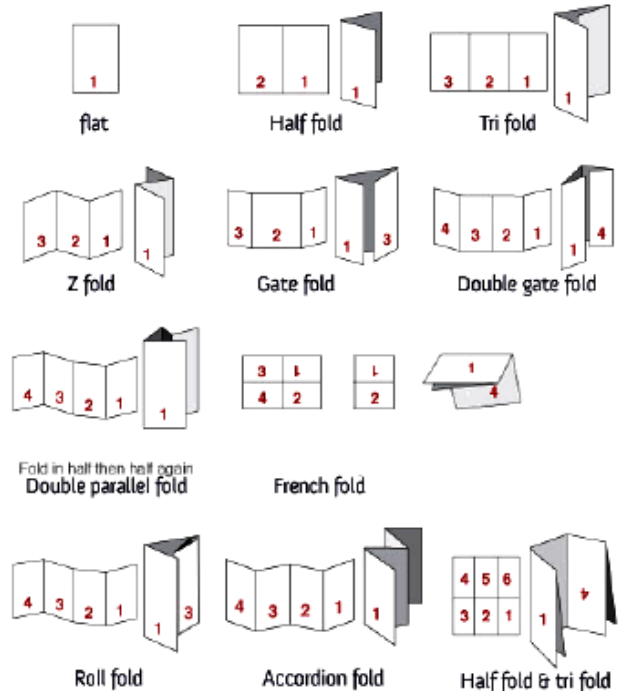
All three use a single sheet of paper folded into 8 panels: one lengthwise fold, then unfold and fold the short side in half and half again. Then you can cut and fold in various ways:



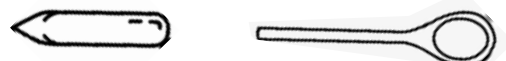
8-PANEL SINGLE SHEET FOLDS

COMMERCIAL 1-SHEET FORMATS

The long thin pieces could be half-sheets of A3 paper.



You can experiment with booklet forms by combining folded pages or varying the width of the panels. Get a crisp fold by using a bone folder or hard implement (the back of a spoon is great) to press the folds. (Don't use your fingernail!)



WORLD BOOK NIGHT UNITED ARTISTS

Sarah Bodman

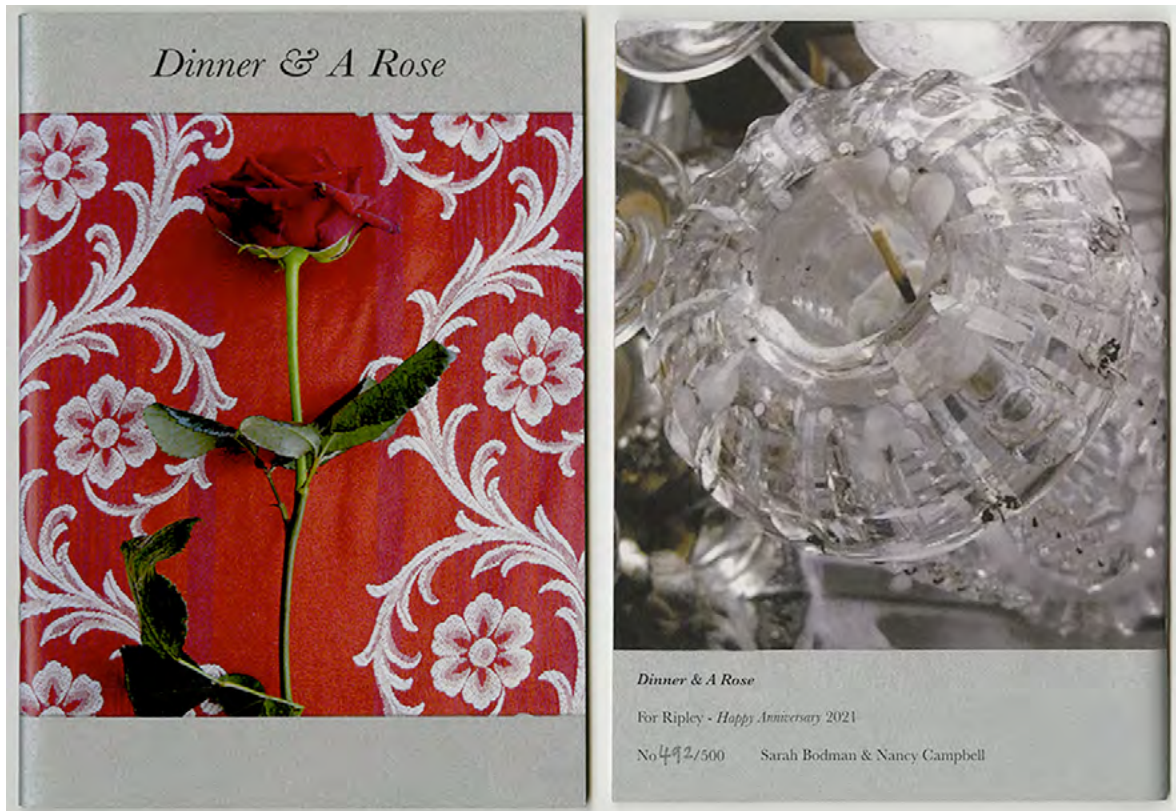
2023 sees the 13th iteration of Bookarts at UWE Bristol's World Book Night (WBN) project, an artists' books-based activity which has grown from an initial two-person collaboration into an annual international, participatory event. It has evolved organically from the 'WBN United Artists' mutual love of literature, poetry, artists' books and mail art, and of introducing other artists to particular books or collaborative ways of working. WBN is an unfunded venture, developed through a wish to extend the opportunity of collaborative bookmaking to the public. Since its inception in 2010, 637 artists, writers, students and the public have contributed artworks/texts in response to our themed calls towards an annual exhibition at Bower Ashton Library here in Bristol, accompanied by complementary video and publication. This article looks back to the origins of WBN, discusses some of the highlights, geographic locations and creative strategies employed by us in organising a large-scale, collaborative event.

Once upon a time

In 2010, I was commissioned by the University of Dundee to create an artist's book for an Arts and Humanities Council (AHRC) funded project: *Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition*, investigating how readers respond to visual aspects of poetry. I nominated the much admired poet and artist Nancy Campbell to be my collaborator on the project. We decided to make an artist's book in homage to a shared favourite novel of ours, Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley*.

Inspired by Poetry Beyond Text's interest in experiment, we recreated Ripley's meals in a live performance/dinner for twelve guests. I prepared all the food and drink detailed in the novel to be consumed by our guests over many hours. Nancy wrote a series of 18 poems inspired by the evening's conversations, and I photographed Ripley's place setting for each course to create our artist's book *Dinner and A Rose* (1).

We found the experience of making a collaborative book a real delight and quickly agreed to create an annual event to fall on World Book Night (23rd April each year) as the 'WBN United Artists', inviting others to join us from 2011. The experimental writing and food link stayed with us for a while as *TOAST: A Night on Weevil Lake* (2011) (2) created an artist's book of text or visual essays from the perspective of a piece of toast in tribute to Douglas Coupland's novel *The Gum Thief*. It also kept true to the content of the novel's lack of gracious hosting with our evening's guests finding nothing being cooked, takeaway food having to be ordered in and eaten off paper plates from Staples stationery store as they created artworks for the video with a limited supply of items. *The Secrets of Metahemeralism* (2012) (3) was written as a collaborative essay by 13 participants on manual typewriters to create an artist's book in tribute to *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt. This time there was feasting whilst working, with deliberately dangerous looking mushrooms, fine wines, frozen cheesecake, Bloody Mary's and other food from the character Bunny Corcoran's funeral. Our secret location in Oxford was the perfect place to respond to a novel set in Hampden College, writing the essay that Bunny might have handed in had he survived.



Toast

Toast
Helen Allsebrook

Sat with a glass of port, perched by the fire with his little lap of spring,
Malty Bateh told his tale of wartime woes...

"Now, this story, is a story with a moral. I'll keep it brief.
I was raised by Sainsbury's, trusted them with my life.
What was to happen next was really quite something and shaped the 5% of *hoof*
(said with bitter, morbid contempt) I remain today.

They threw me into a cave, a hot dark cave. They released me after 45 minutes
of intense, dry heat. I gasped for air and water then slumped in relief.

A young boy, who looked like he'd been kept under poor conditions himself,
with spotted face and unwashed hair, haphazardly thrust me towards a grating
guillotine of 20 blades

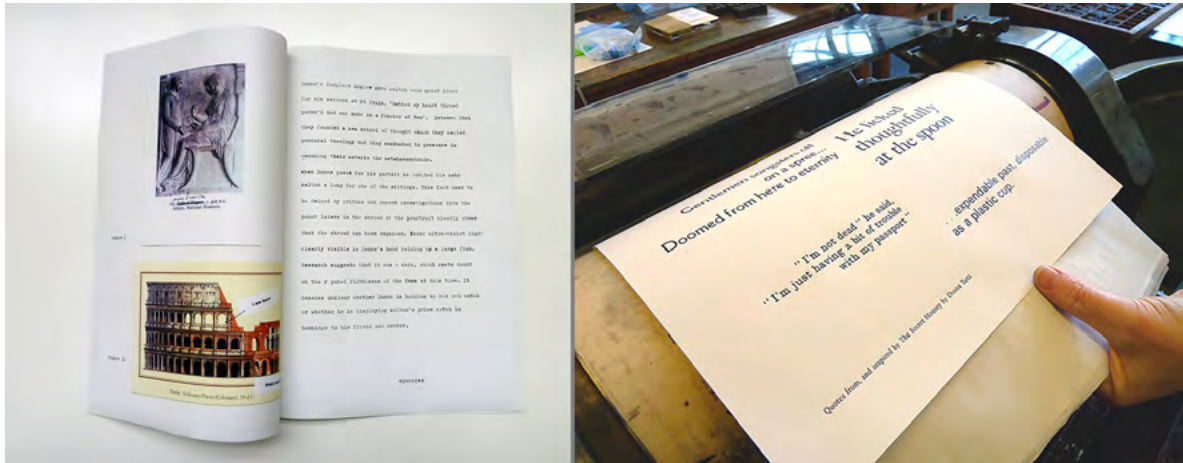
It left me in pieces.
I thought to myself, I rose once before, *I will rise again!*
How optimistic.

23

1 (above) *Dinner & A Rose*, Sarah Bodman and Nancy Campbell (anniversary edition 2021).

2 (below) Detail: Helen Allsebrook's contribution to *TOAST: A Night on Weevil Lake* (2011).

Photographs: Sarah Bodman 2022.



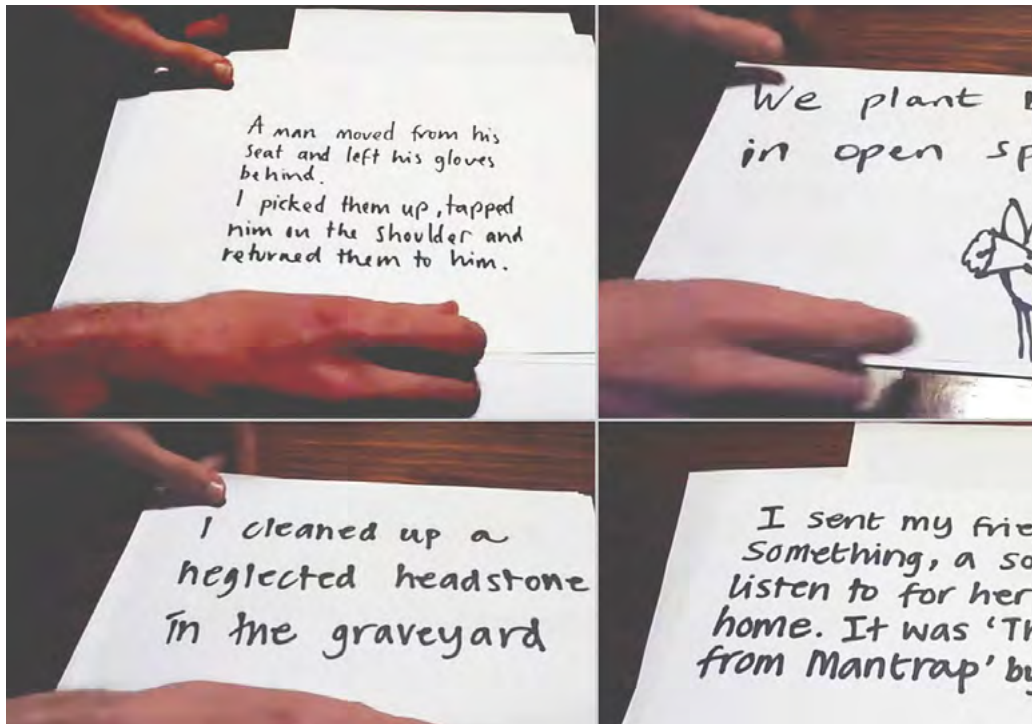
3 *The Secrets of Metahemeralism* artist's book and letterpress printed poster editioned for the project's contributors by Angie Butler & Hazel Grainger (2012). *Photographs: Sarah Bodman 2012.*

Models, Manners and Mischief

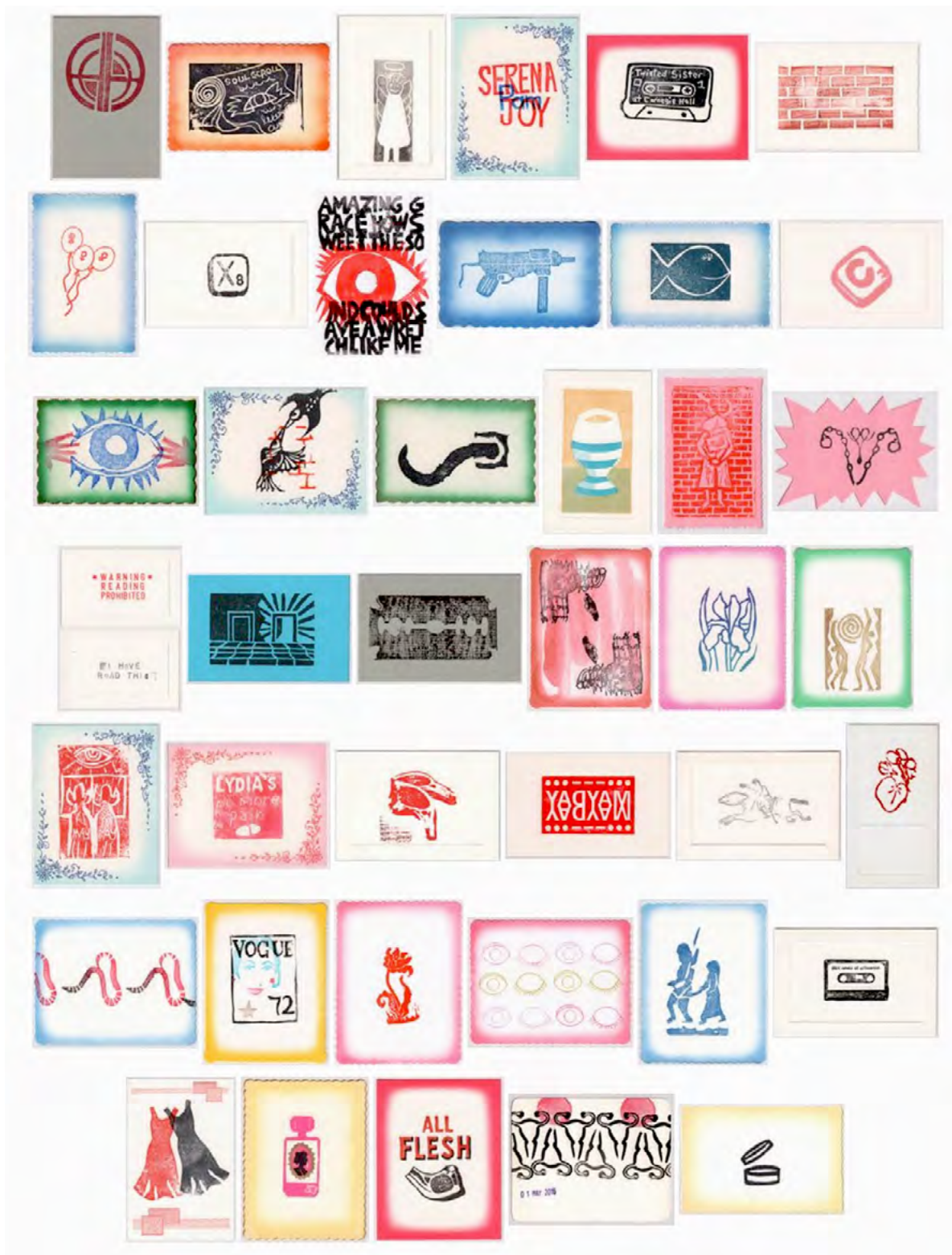
Books are selected by nominations, votes or invitations, and range from popular fiction to contemporary literature. This part continues to evolve organically, and a chance encounter or a casual conversation between artists, writers or students can soon enthusiastically transform into a tangible brief. It's often a little dance around what will work, be democratic for people to join, possible to post or email, fit into display cabinets or be easy to share. That is always a fun bit, untangling the last little bits of why, how, and where before we make it formal. Can we ask for contributions to be just audio this year? (not really), Is it possible to make a mini newspaper edition in one day? (yes), or a postcard made, written, scanned and emailed from Kathmandu in an hour? (yes).

The participatory calls are announced via the Book Arts Newsletter, Bookarts website and social media. Over the years, contributors have sent in reports of good deeds for a zine (*Some Small Good Things*, 2013 (4)) in tribute to Raymond Carver, 3-word poems for a letterpress printed booklet for Charles Bukowski's *Post Office* (2014) and a turntable full of handmade miniature artefacts (*Shine On*, 2015 (5, 6)) from Stephen King's magnificent horror novel *The Shining*. Sometimes people join in once because the nominated book is a particular favourite of theirs, others such as the poet Jeremy Dixon - who summed up WBN 2016 perfectly as: '40 artists, 16 stampers, one day = Serena Joy' have stayed for the long haul.

By 2016 our core group of WBN United Artists had grown. Now that we were more than could fit comfortably inside a small, terraced house in Bristol to make work together we began to look for other spaces. Our set book that year was nominated by the artist John Bently, who also wrote and performed a tribute 'sermon' for the video. Forty-three artists read *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, and then designed rubber stamp artwork for us to print as the *Serena Joy* artist's book/folio. Their stamps arrived in the post from Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, Poland, Sweden and all over the UK (7). Sixteen of us met in Halifax, UK to print the artworks an edition of 50 (2,750 rubber stampings!) assemble boxes and make a short film in the evening. Each contributor chose a pseudonym based on the book, from a cosmetics or beauty line, cake mix, frozen dessert or medicinal remedy, for example *Covonia Linctus* (Corinne Welch) or



- 4 (top) Video stills from *Some Small Good Things* (2013). Photograph: Sarah Bodman 2022
 5 (centre) Artist's book recording all the miniature models sent in for *Shine On* (2015). Photo: Frank Menger 2022
 6 (below) Detail of one of the miniature models created for *Shine On*, a bundle of newspapers 4.5 x 2.5 cm, by Philippa Wood (2015). Photograph: Sarah Bodman 2022



7 All of the 40 rubber stamp printed cards inside the *Serena Joy* box, made in an edition of 50 (2016).
 Photograph: Sarah Bodman 2022



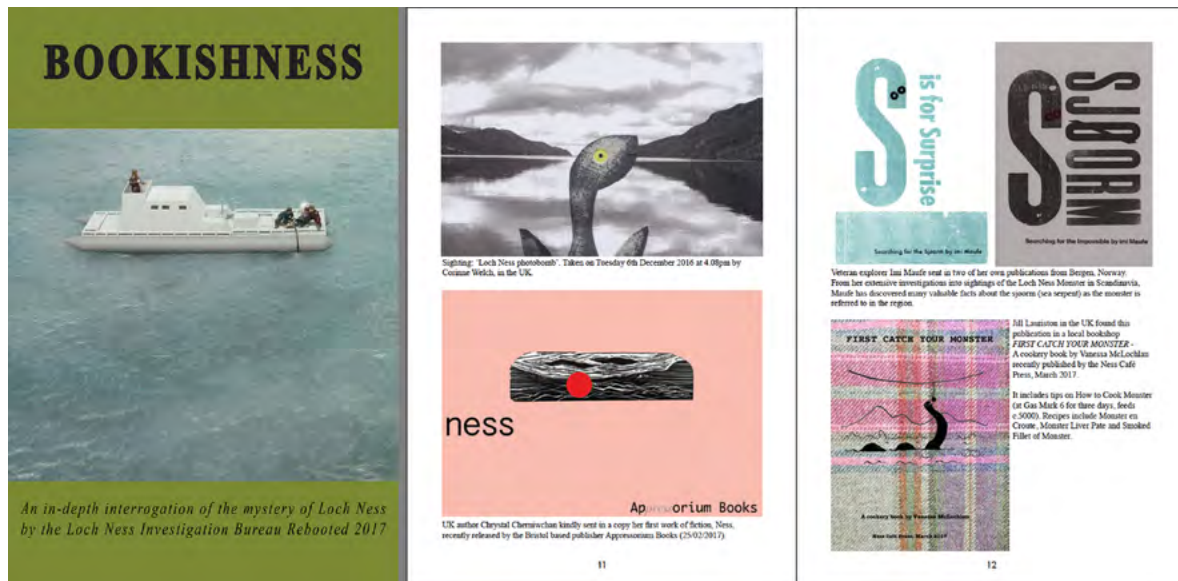
8 *Serena Joy* (2016).
Photograph: Frank Menger 2022.

Blessed Milkthistle (Karen Apps) to list in the publication. Luckily a visit to a letterpress printer's convention earlier in the year meant we had hundreds of printers' blanks to fit into our *Serena Joy* box constructed and screenprinted to resemble cheap but aspirational perfume packaging (8). It became clear as the artworks arrived, that issues from the book were still (unfortunately) topical, from women's rights to access to abortion. The more recent TV adaptation played out amidst a growing shift towards greater misogyny - from right wing politics in the USA to the Taliban's return to rule in Afghanistan, and now in 2022, with the *Roe v. Wade* ruling recently overturned by the Supreme Court in the USA, it seems the book will remain far too relevant for the foreseeable future. On a happier note, Linda Parr wrote to Margaret Atwood via her agent to see if she would like a copy of our artist's book *Serena Joy* and to our delight, a copy was graciously accepted and acknowledged on social media (Atwood kindly Tweeted about the project and our WBN video on receipt of her copy).

Tall Tales from a Distance

'Although there have been quite a few books written on the subject, really we know very little.'
(Searle 1976: n.p.)

World Book Night 2017's theme was nominated by the artist Stephen Fowler (aka the rubber stamp king). Stephen runs classes for us as part of our CPD programmes at UWE and is a regular contributor to the project. A particular wish from his childhood was to go to Loch Ness in search of the monster and that is what we somehow ended up doing. Our tribute was to all the weird and wonderful, scientific and practical, believing and sceptical endeavours recorded in publications about the Loch Ness Monster – hence the apt project title of *BOOK ISH NESS* coined by Linda Parr. We formed an investigatory team of artists, writers and students and invited people to send us their photographic or hand drawn evidence of a sighting of Nessie, or design a book cover about the Loch Ness Monster.



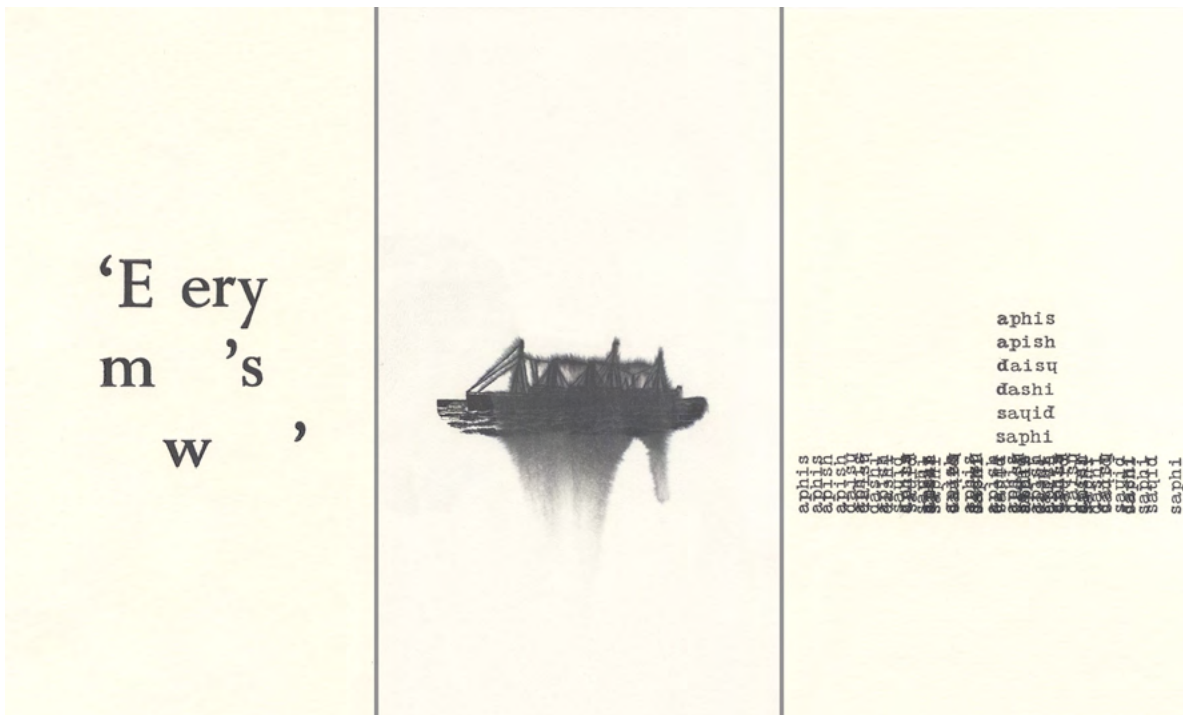
9 *BOOKISHNESS* cover and inside spread from the publication, edition of 100 (2017).
 Photograph: Sarah Bodman 2022.

On 10th March 2017, a research party of 13 members met at Fort Augustus, Scotland. The Loch Ness Investigation Bureau (officially formed in 1961 closed in 1972) was rebooted in early 2017 after a myriad of monster sightings in lakes, rivers and seas around Denmark, Norway and Sweden, Germany and The Netherlands, and even in Minnesota and New Jersey, USA. The LNIBR research team had five days in which to conduct their investigation of Loch Ness, keeping watch day and night. Sightings were rubber stamped on collaborative maps or recorded with ink mixed with water from the Loch. A very fortunate encounter with naturalist and Loch Ness researcher Adrian Shine of The Loch Ness Project in Drumnadrochit offered insights for the team's quest (and made Stephen's day as he sat and chatted with him in the museum café).

Our resulting artist's book / investigative report *BOOKISHNESS* (9) was supplemented by the many contributors' sightings recorded and printed in the publication. These sightings were sent in by individual witnesses and will over time be validated through stringent testing by the LNIBR. Alongside photographic evidence, we published for the first time, a bibliography of new editions on the subject of the Loch Ness Monster sent in by authors and the general public. We launched the publication as a limited edition of 100 at Bristol Artist's Book Event (BABE) in April 2017 at Arnolfini, Bristol, UK. It has long sold out but can be downloaded as a free pdf from our website where you can also watch some videos from our expedition.

For 2018, the World Book Night United Artists issued an invitation to read and respond to the short story 'Watching God' in the collection *Three Moments of an Explosion* by China Miéville. It's an incredible text full of allusions and references, it filled our heads with words and images. There were so many ways in which readers could respond to the text, printing, writing, drawing, collage, nest making, bookbinding, or even raft building. Contributors sent in visual or textual (or both) contributions from Germany, Spain, Sweden, the UK and USA. (10)

Artist Chrystal Cherniwchan co-curated the 2018 project with me, making an Instagram gallery of all the artworks. Some of our favourites were a model ship bookwork *EM-EN COUNTER* by poet Leonard McDermid, typewriter and letterpress visual poetry by Gen Harrison (aka



10 (above, left) *Collage* by Éilis Kirby (AKA EAK), 2018. *Photograph:* Éilis Kirby 2018. (above, right): *EM-EN COUNTER* bookwork, Leonard McDermid, Stichill Marigold Press 2018. *Photograph:* © Leonard McDermid 2018.
 11 (below) Typewriter and letterpress visual poetry by Gen Harrison (Typochondriacs) 2018. *Photograph:* Sarah Bodman 2022.



12 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, image of our publish-on-demand book, from the video produced at Weston-super-Mare library (2018). Photograph: Si Butler 2018.



13 Anti-clockwise from top left: The WBN 2018 collaborative artist's book *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; *Perm Green Light*, *Red Blue Shades* and *Cad Yellow Deep*, repurposing leftover words and images from the project, Sarah Bodman & Chrystal Cherniwchan, 2018. *Lago Cremisi Permanente*, our later collaboration inspired by the project, 2019. Photograph: Frank Menger 2022.



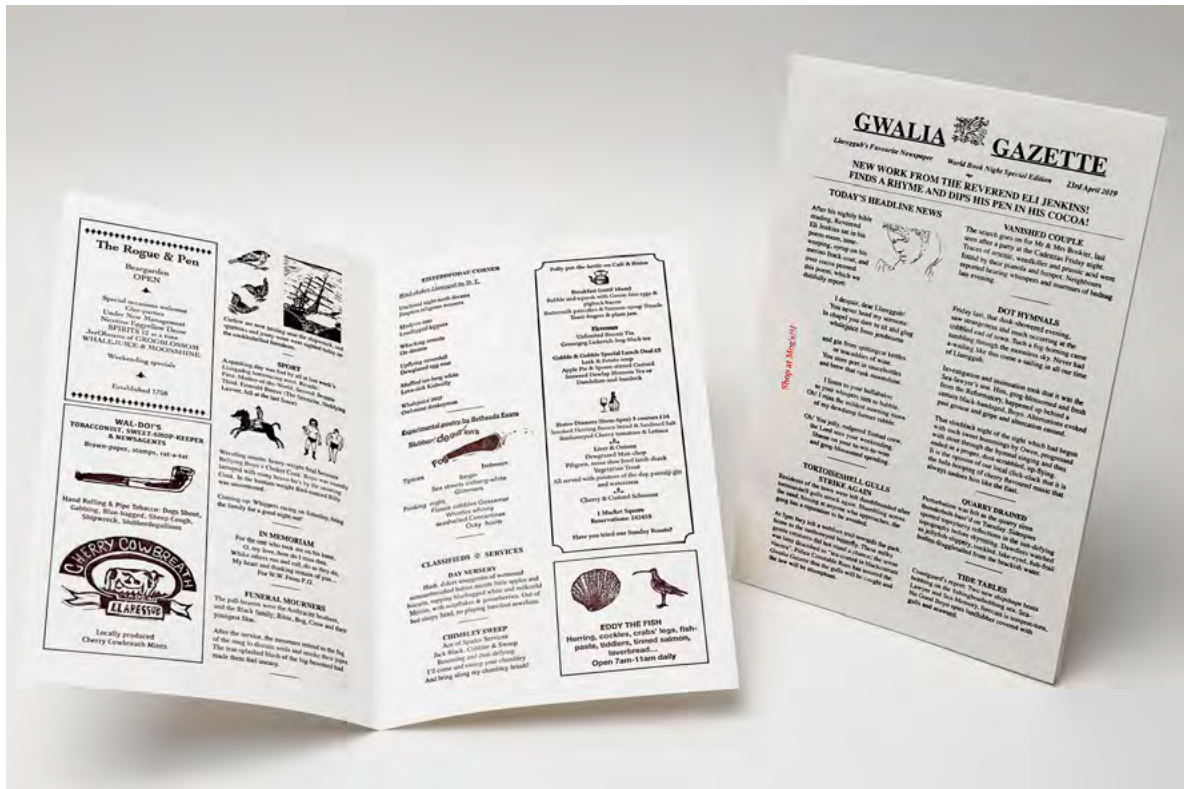
14 The Boat House, Laugharne, Wales, with portable letters by Jeremy Dixon. Photographs: Jeremy Dixon.

Typochondriacs) (11) and a series of collages by Éilis Kirby. Chrystal and I scoured second-hand shops around the city for old frames to house the submissions for the *Found on the Isthmus* exhibition at Bower Ashton Library. Their contents removed, the frames were left dusty, and dented, as if the inserted pieces on display had just been unearthed from another time and place. We also scanned and played around with the paintings and prints we cut out of the frames and used them to create a series of three artists' books between the two of us: *Perm Green Light*, *Red Blue Shades* and *Cad Yellow Deep*, repurposing with leftover words from the project (12). A day trip to Weston-super-Mare's town Library in North Somerset allowed us to film some shots for the video with ships in the distant estuary. We used publish-on-demand¹ to produce the WBN 2018 artist's book *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which provides 'a tour of the exhibition in the town hall library & gallery' (13). The title is of the book that was never found in Miéville's story – a tribute to Zora Neale Hurston's 1937 novel.

Reading all about it...

Linda Parr joined as long-term co-curator for WBN from 2019, and as such selected Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* for our themed call. Artists, writers and the public were asked to select their ten favourite words to send us from the play (14). Artists, translators and writers sent their chosen words from Canada, Germany, Israel, The Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and USA.

A core group of WBN United Artists then returned those words to Wales, visiting Carmarthen and Dylan Thomas's former home in Laugharne in March 2019. Between us, we jumbled up the words to create a small, local newspaper, the *Gwalia Gazette* (15). We also took inspiration from WBN award winning poet Jeremy Dixon's debut poetry collection *IN RETAIL*. The letterpress printed broadside features local news, classified ads, a poets' corner, advertisements for local shops and services, racing results and even a lonely-hearts section. A free pdf version can be downloaded from the bookarts website.



15 The *Gwalia Gazette*, composed between the WBN United Artists core group using the favourite 10 words sent in by all participants. Design Sarah Bodman, rubber stamps by Stephen Fowler and Zeldia Velika, letterpress, polymer plate, printed by Angie Butler & Linda Parr, Shop at Moggs!!! additional stamp by Linda Parr, 2019. Photograph: Frank Menger 2022.

We stayed at home and thought of where?

In light of Nancy’s polar environment concerns in *The Library of Ice: Readings from a Cold Climate*, we decided not to travel to produce a collaborative artwork for WBN 2020. Instead, we intended to roam virtually through fiction and libraries. Our set texts emerged as: W. G. Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn*, Olga Tokarczuk’s *Flights*, and the poem ‘Questions of Travel’ by Elizabeth Bishop, nominated by Csilla Bíro, Sarah Bodman, Nancy Campbell and Linda Parr. We asked people to sit in libraries (real or imagined), read books and travel through their imagination. Little did we know when we set the brief in December 2019, how prescient it would become as the Covid-19 pandemic created lockdowns around the world.

98 artists joined the project, sending us 113 postcards from Argentina, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Nepal, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA.

We originally planned to exhibit all the postcards together over the month of April 2020 at Bower Ashton Library and then do a mail art swap. However, our plans adapted as public spaces rapidly closed (16).

We switched to creating an online exhibition, presented in a Postcard Album, detailing all the postcards whether they had arrived physically or virtually during lockdown. Linda had already written a text about libraries for the WBN keepsake postcard, letterpress printed at home on her Adana press. We made a list of WBN contributors who would be willing to spend some lockdown time editing at home (with typewriters, collage, rubber stamps, etc.) to fill the



15 Inner and outer envelopes and the postcard from Bet Swishes (centre) for World Book Night 2020. Photograph: Frank Menger 2022.

reverse of the postcards (if you flash forward to 2021 you could look back and see where the seeds for the *Postcards for Perec* project were sown by Linda). Volunteers were sent packs of 10 to work on, and even keener volunteers also took packs of the cardboard outer envelopes so we would have some beautiful post to send out to people. Our little group spent a few months producing mail art exchange keepsakes for each of the 98 contributors and some libraries. Linda plundered her childhood stamp collection and I collaged and stamped 100+ inner envelopes using whatever I could get my hands on. We even had some 'Bower Ashton Library' official rubber stamps that Shaun Oaten, our library's Information & Engagement Administrator, had thrown into one of my bags as university staff desperately packed supplies for months of online teaching and research in a few hours. By July 2020 we were allowed to meet up outside in the UK, so Linda and I spent a long and happy day in my tiny garden collating 100+ sets of mail art exchange packages to post out to contributors. A *lot* of money was spent on postage stamps, but it felt good to keep people connected and the WBN group busy. Our 2020 motto, coined by Linda, became: **LIBRARIES * EVEN * ELECTRONIC * ARE * MAGIC (17, 18).**

Saying it with Flowers

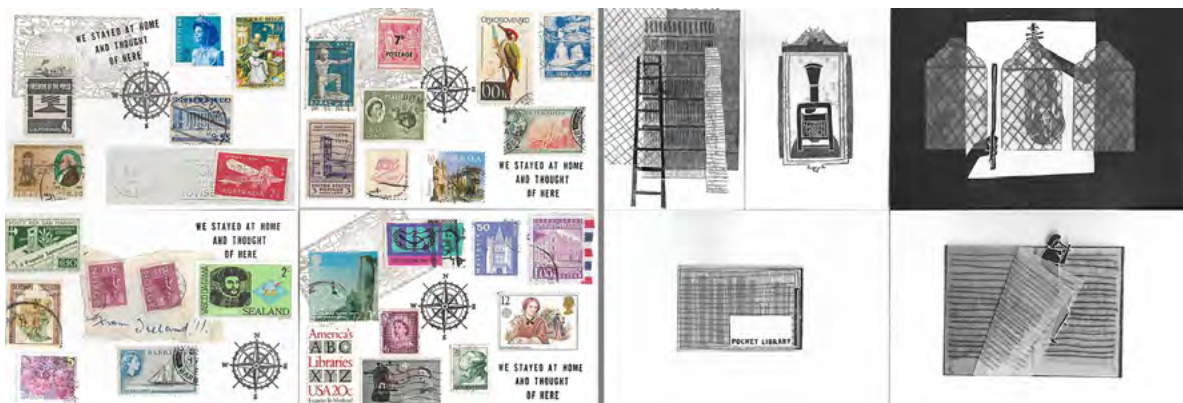
'With freedom, flowers, books, and the moon, who could not be perfectly happy?' (Wilde 1905, 100).

Oscar Wilde's letter "from the depths" of HM Prison Reading, separated from his friends and audiences became a kind of mascot for *The Herbarium*. The brief was negotiated during lockdown, and Linda was keen that it should avoid the politics and pestilence that swirled around us and be a lovely thing to bring cheer: *After the year that was 2020, let's spread some happiness in 2021*. We kept it simple, easy to exchange and possible to post from the confines of lockdowns in different countries. Our request was in two parts: 1) to read a poem, book or



17 (above) Postcards, clockwise from top left, sent during lockdowns from: Bindu Adhikary, Nepal; Cathey Webb, UK; David Dellafiara, Australia; Sara Elgerot, Sweden.

18 (below, left) Outer envelopes decorated with stamps raided from Linda's childhood collection, 2020. Right: WBN contributor Emma Brown's set of handmade designs for the back of the postcards with text by Bet Swishes, 2020. Photographs: Sarah Bodman 2022.





19 Philippa Wood: 'Sunflower and chives', and Tamar MacLellan: 'Lavender and leeks', for *Companion Planting*, Richard Bird, Quarto Publishing Plc, 1990. Photograph: Sarah Bodman 2022

text about flowers, or a book that mentions flowers, has a title with flowers...etc. Or invent a book about flowers. Make a note of the title, author, publisher, date so we can, together, create a collective bibliography of flowers. 2) to create a flower - paper, fabric, collage, drawn, printed, or photographic (2D or 3D, no larger than 8 x 8 x 2 cm). These were to be sent for an exhibition (we hoped) and mail art exchange for World Book Night 2021. We booked the exhibition cases at Bower Ashton Library for April - May, with a plan to exhibit the flowers and then swap them so each person received a different one. 141 artists from fifteen countries sent us 168 flowers. Blooms arrived from: the UK, Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Nepal, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Singapore, Sweden, & the USA (19).

But as all the beautiful mail arrived, lockdowns continued to prevent movement, so although we could install the show for the students to see, no-one could visit it from outside the university. We shared the flowers in an online catalogue (again) for the public and contributors to download. By the end of the exhibition we could at least meet up outside, so Linda and I went back to the garden (literally) and folded 150 boxes, popped in the artists' flowers, and added a special treat which we revealed in a short video on World Book Night, 23rd April 2021. We had commissioned Nancy Campbell to write a series of poems. They were hand-set and letterpress printed by Ellen Bills at the Letterpress Collective in Bristol, in a limited edition of 150 booklets and postcards, to make a very special keepsake set. Angie Butler had asked Pat Randle of Nomad Letterpress if we could borrow two blocks, Watercress and Yarrow, from his collection of boxwood engravings made by Hellmuth Weissenborn in 1946. Ellen delivered the printed booklets and cards by bicycle with Nancy's poems and the two images printed in Spring green, blue and yellow, to go into the little boxes we had constructed. Everyone loved their packages, even though some took months to reach their recipients in Australia and Nepal due to lockdown postal delays (20).



20 The keepsake set of poems by Nancy Campbell, interspersed with flowers artworks by Corinne Welch (left), Ahlrich van Ohlen (middle) and Gin Saunders (right). *Photograph: Frank Menger 2022.*

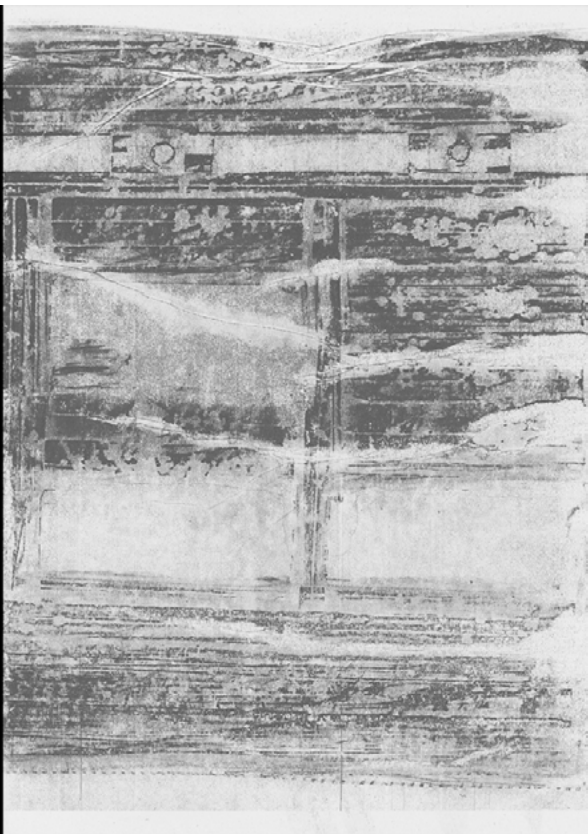
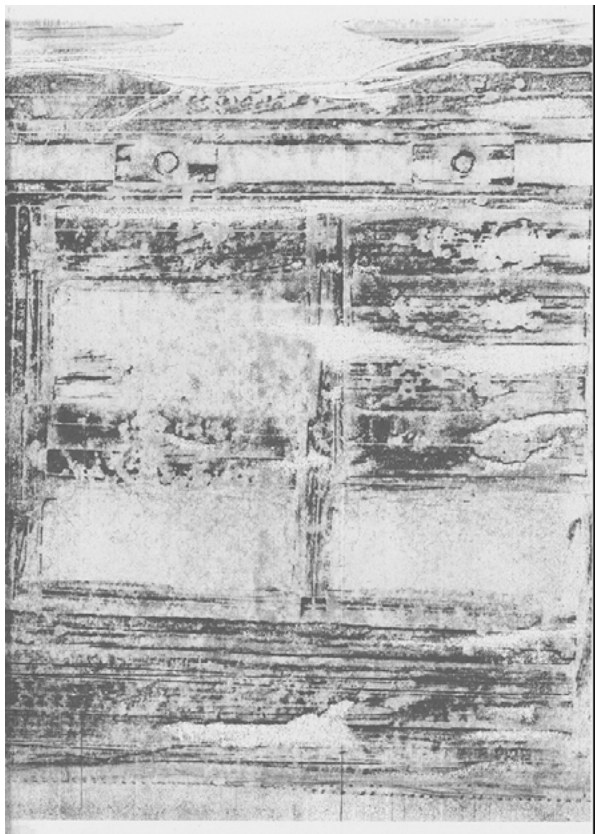
Ghosts in the Machines

By 2022 we were determined to make a bigger exhibition and to make sure it was available to anyone. A few contributors had talked about spine-tingling horror and ghost tales, Shirley Jackson's super spooky novel *The Haunting of Hill House* had been passing between many hands over winter as had M. R. James's short story 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad'. Soon more recommendations were coming in recommending haunting tales by John Ajvide Lindqvist, Pierre de Ronsard, Fritz Lieber, Toni Morrison, Jan Pienkowski, Pu Songling, Astrid Lindgren, Aoko Matsuda, Stanislaw Herman Lem and Daphne du Maurier.

We invited project participants to create an image that we could print in black and white and tell us their favourite ghost story to accompany it. As many contributors were still under Covid restrictions or lockdowns we decided the WBN publication would be made as a free PDF download and a physical A4 loose-leaf artist's book which could be taken apart and made into a portable exhibition, so any participant could have an exhibition at home too if they wanted.

We received 95 spectral contributions from Australia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan, UK & Ireland, and the USA (21). The project was set as an optional brief for students of the Higher Diploma in Visual Arts and Culture and Higher Diploma in Illustration programmes at Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI), Department of Communication Design, Hong Kong, organised by Jessica Ho who is a Visiting Fellow here at the Centre for Print Research. Jessica also organised an exhibition until September 2022 at the HKDI Library, and has booked in another for WBN 2023. One of our MA students Lizzie Smith made a little ghost robot that was so cute, we asked if we could use it for the cover of the last physical print edition of *The Blue Notebook* journal for artists' books Volume 16 No 2.²

In March 2022 we were actually able to meet up properly at the university again for the first time since before Covid. Linda brought along a mini proton pack as a celebratory mascot to accompany us as we assembled the 100 stacks of 95 pages to go into their envelopes, plus a



21 (above) Two contributions to WBN 2022: Left to right: Jessica Ho, Hong Kong; Lee Shearman, UK.

22 (below) Special insert *Ghost in the Machine*, Gestetner printed in an edition of 100 by Csilla Bíró, 2022. Photographs: Sarah Bodman 2021, 2022.



23 *The Night Diana Died/I Remember A Time (Princess)*, Roelof Bakker, 2022. Photograph: Roelof Bakker 2022.

special edition *Ghost in the Machine* insert by Csilla Bíro printed on her old faithful Gestetner. With a lucky find of some old chart recorder papers and a bandsaw later, we now had strips to fasten the covers so each one in the edition of 100 is unique. A copy of the publication was sent to each participant and the remainder donated to libraries and archives. We launched the exhibition early so that visitors to Bristol Artist's Book Event (BABE) in April could see the artworks, and contributing exhibitors at BABE could collect their copy of the publication over the weekend. It was such a treat to see everyone after two years apart. And of course, the publication being available as a PDF meant that Jessica could print a set to show in Hong Kong at the same time with no postage costs or delays (22).

We Remember and we look to the future

The call for World Book Night 2023 invited contributors to read *I Remember* by Joe Brainard and/or *I Remember (Je me souviens)* by Georges Perec (trans. Philip Terry) and consider how they might represent a memory that could be used to create a shared experience, a coming together of voices from the past and present. We received 114 entries from around the world for the exhibition in Bristol from April - June 2023 and Hong Kong from July - September 2023. The mixture of 2D and 3D works play with the relationships between memory, word and image (23).



24 *We Remember*, a collaborative keepsake booklet by Ioulia Akhmadeeva & Sylee Gore, commissioned for participants of World Book Night 2023. Image © Ioulia Akhmadeeva | Text © Sylee Gore. Risograph printed in a limited edition of 200 at the London Centre for Book Arts. Photograph: Sarah Bodman 2023

You can watch the video, download the catalogue and listen to an audio piece on our website.³ A specially commissioned keepsake by writer Sylee Gore and artist Ioulia Akhmadeeva was risograph printed in an edition of 200 by the London Centre for Book Arts and posted to all our project participants (24). If you would like to see more visual examples or learn more about the history of Bookarts at UWE's WBN calls, please watch 'What We Do in the Shadows: bringing book arts into World Book Night' on our YouTube channel.⁴ WBN United Artists hope that having read this you will consider joining us in 2024, our call will be for text, image or audio works (and a collaborative bibliography) in appreciation of wild birds. Do feel free to get in touch with any questions.

Notes

¹ When we have materials to hand, we make and send free copies of the collaborative books or prints, or we exchange artworks. When we don't have the materials or money, we make use of publish-on-demand services such as Blurb or Lulu. This also links to our research project A Manifesto for the Book - What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century?, in which we used P-O-D for a series of artists' books to demonstrate the value of the process, and included it in our manifesto as an example of accessible publishing for artists.

² From Vol 17 October 2022, all issues of The Blue Notebook journal for artists' books are free download pdfs, available from our website: <https://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/blue-notebook/>

³ <https://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/wbn2023>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vQXN0kefpc>

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About the author

Sarah Bodman is an artist and researcher at the Centre for Print Research, UWE, Bristol, UK. She is editor of the *Artist's Book Yearbook*, *Book Arts Newsletter* and *The Blue Notebook* journal for artists' books. Sarah is also Programme Leader for the MA Multidisciplinary Printmaking course at UWE. Her recent artworks include *Read With Me* (2022), the result of a long-term collaboration with a psychometric reader and the public.



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NOT THINKING ABOUT THE CIRCUS AT THE CIRCUS

Angela Gardner & Gwenn Tasker

Abstract

This photoessay explores the creation of a collaborative book *Not Thinking about the Circus at the Circus*, a finalist in the ArtSpace Mackay Libris Award and recently acquired by ArtSpace Mackay for their artist book collection. It particularly addresses the social and political uses of creative publishing, creative art/text publishing relationships and collaborative shifts.

NOT THINKING ABOUT THE CIRCUS AT THE CIRCUS

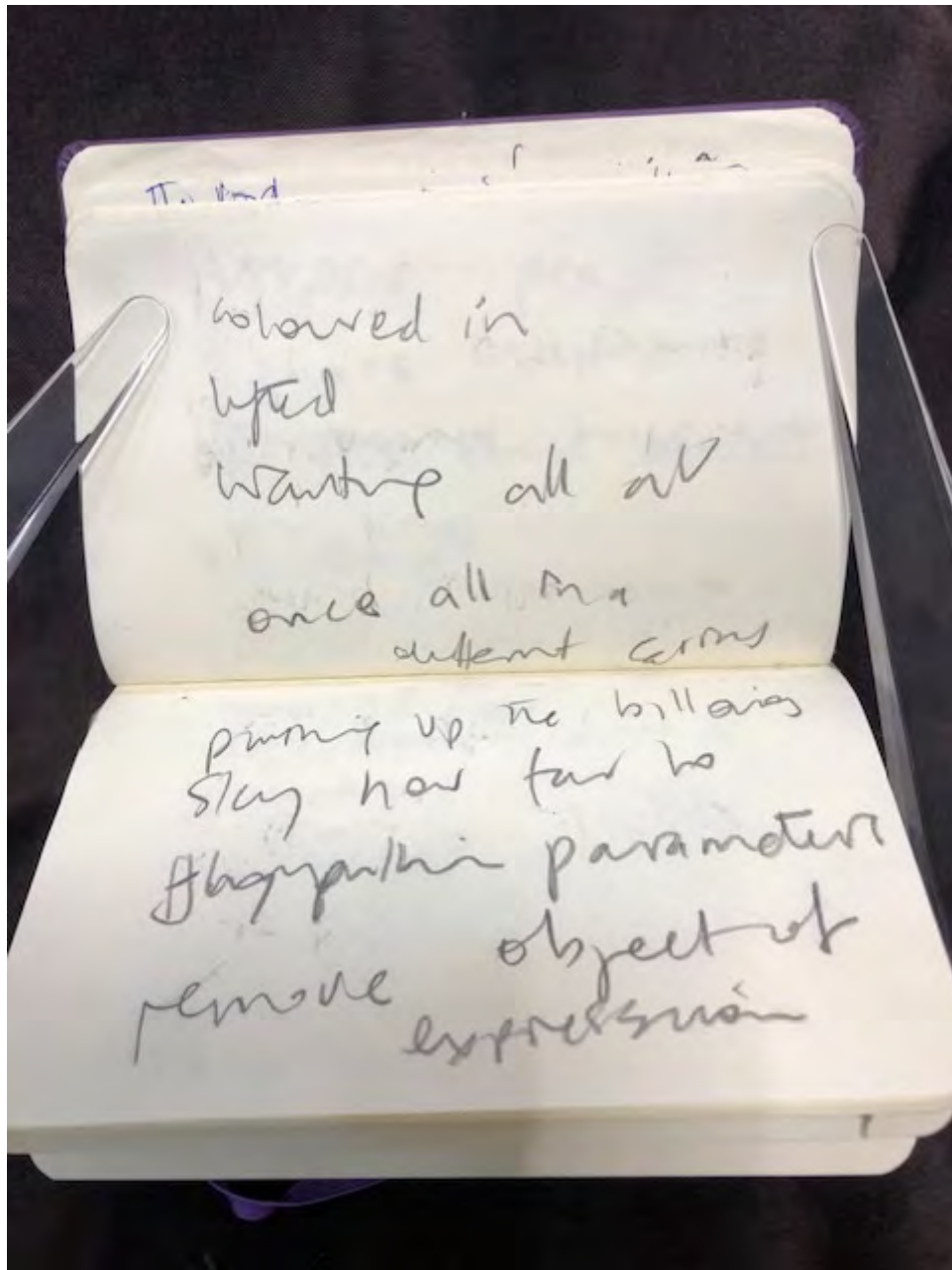
Angela Gardner and Gwenn Tasker



1

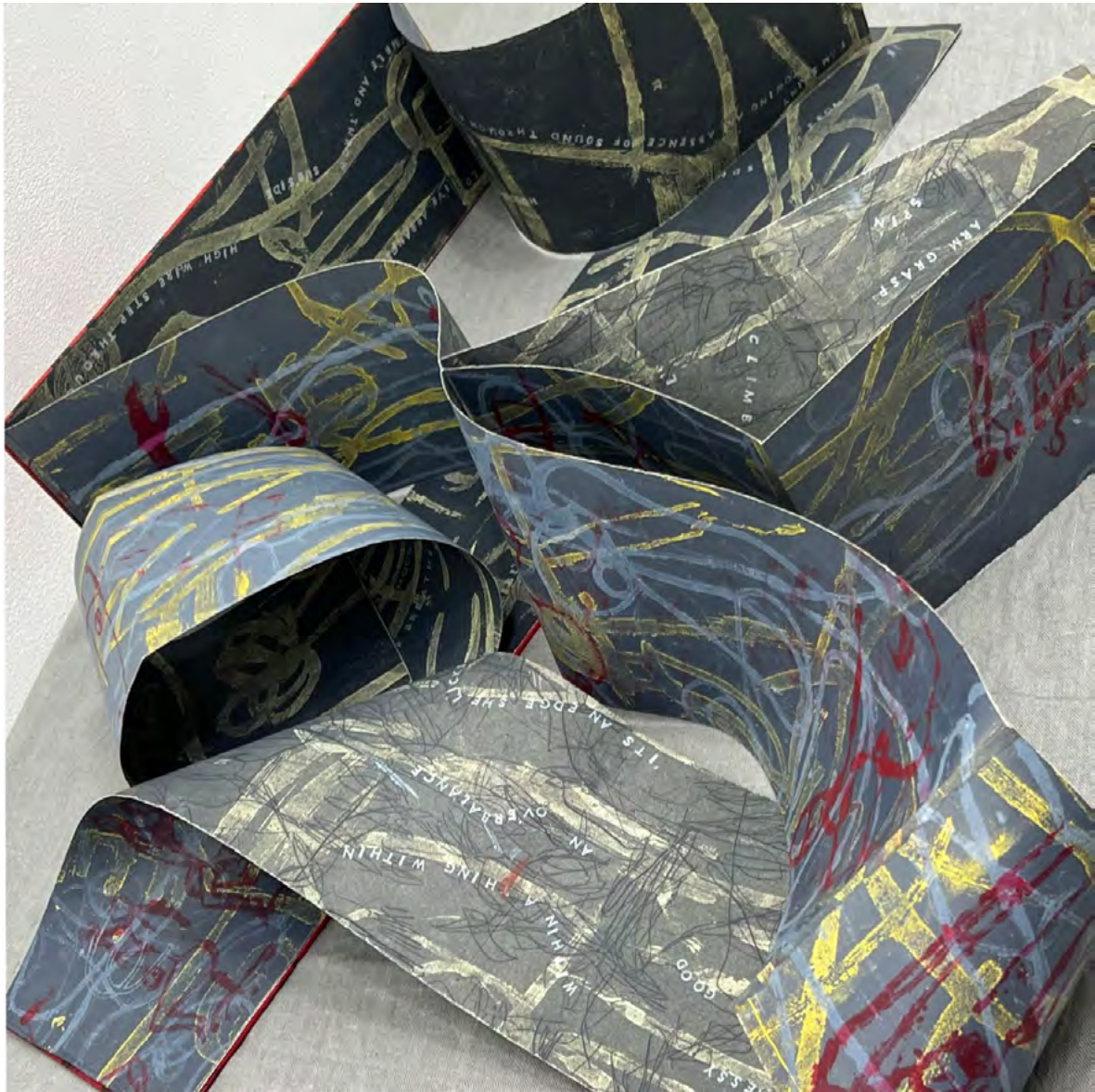


2











7

Not Thinking About the Circus at the Circus

I am shiny, towing an absence of sound through a tunnel. Holding wrappers of the world I've arranged with head dead and disengaged as tumble and throw subside. High wire step through the empty ring of the moon. Its four quarters quartered inside, arms strength, arm grasp, spin, climb and fall.

A door slams, a body slams.

It's important to rebuff distraction. Self-violence works on the body with near misses, forcing confidences to strangers: that gift of unburdening. I listen: her in tangles of herself sometimes messy. And it all looks fine to start with: doll-witted within a thing, within an overbalance. It's an edge she licks, for its bloody taste, hidden from any clean-up crew.

A hard surface, oh yes but then there is ballast that sweetens the acts in icing sugar. Access is a problem. She knows he sees what he sees, in a dismount, to kiss or breathe.

It all hangs on the tethered wrist or ankle: The *idea of the real*, companion to that personal copy we each separately hold. That interval between possible worlds, the hinge it all hangs from.



List of Works

- 1 Angela Gardner & Gwenn Tasker, *Not thinking about the Circus at the Circus* 2021, cover detail. Etching on paper, card.
- 2 Angela Gardner & Gwenn Tasker, *Not thinking about the Circus at the Circus* 2021, book pages (detail). Etchings and letter stamps on paper, concertina format.
- 3 Angela Gardner, Circus writing sketchbook page. Papers of Angela Gardner, Special Collections, UNSW Canberra, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, MSS 383, Consignment 2, Box 2, Purple moleskin notebook, c 2015 ('gift from Maren Götzmann'), Handwritten extracts of draft poem 'Not Thinking About the Circus at the Circus'.
- 4 Gwenn Tasker, Circus sketch [c 2015], pen on paper .
- 5 Gwenn Tasker, Circus sketch [c 2015], pen on paper.
- 6 Angela Gardner & Gwenn Tasker, *Not thinking about the Circus at the Circus* 2021 (detail). Etchings and letter stamps on paper, concertina format.
- 7 Angela Gardner & Gwenn Tasker, *Not thinking about the Circus at the Circus* 2021 (detail). Etchings and letter stamps on paper, concertina format.
- 8 Angela Gardner & Gwenn Tasker, *Not thinking about the Circus at the Circus* 2021 (detail). Etchings and letter stamps on paper, concertina format.

Contextual Statement

Cruelty is above all lucid, a kind of rigid control and submission to necessity.
Letters on Cruelty, Antonin Artaud

In April 2016 Gwenn Tasker and Angela Gardner went to a circus performance by Circa Ensemble called *when one door closes* at the Brisbane Powerhouse, during which Gwenn drew and Angela wrote. We sat in the front row and, as one reviewer wrote,² it was a brutal, intensely physical show highlighting feminist opposition to domestic violence. In the audience it felt influenced by Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty as if by violent assault the work intended to shatter a comfortably false reality. As physical theatre, it was beautiful, disturbing and mesmerising, exhibiting moments of poise and balance, of pattern and repetition.

The performance was in the round so everything was happening at once and it was impossible to focus on one thing without losing sight of another. It was designed to act in close-up upon the spectators and its collision of bodies shocked us as we worked. Both of us worked in the dark with our eyes on the stage rather than the page, a method of notation with the non-dominant thumb guiding the next mark that resulted in unruly lines, both drawn and written, that attempted to fly off the page.

After that evening Angela worked further on the poem, including in her thinking a chance encounter with a woman on the last Gympie train from Brisbane one evening who was desperate to talk about her loss of access to her grandchildren and her fears for their safety in what appeared to be a controlling relationship with their step-father. The finished poem,

mixing the two realities of theatre and the street, was first published in *Rochford Street Review*, 2016 and then in her collection, *Some Sketchy Notes on Matter* (Recent Work Press, 2020).

As artists we both have established individual creative practices, but we had always intended that the evening would result in a collaborative artist book. As part of the NightLadder Collective we are committed to an egalitarian, co-operative way of working. We use the Artist Book to explore a synergy between individual practices and to create a site of conversation, at once formal and spontaneous. We saw the project as a balance between contributors with the text, art and page also collaborating to develop meaning. None of the three elements – TEXT/PAGE/ART – were seen as illustrating another element but instead each element was integral and all had to hold together to deliver a cohesive result.

In the studio together we discussed how we could use the artist book as the site or performance space for the strange intersection between circus and domestic violence we had witnessed. This was influenced by Peter Brook's assertion "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage."³ Our empty space was at that point an unmade book, and our intention "a virtuality whose double has produced this intense stage poetry, this many-hued spatial language."⁴

Circus, such as this performance, requires acrobatic balancing, trapeze, tumbling and tightrope skills together with high levels of control over the body and its surrounding space. To understand the collision of the subject of domestic violence and its delivery as circus, we turned to Tittle's Control Balance Theory⁵ which predicts the probability of deviant behaviour occurring and the characteristic form of deviation determined by the relationship between the control that a person is exposed to and the control that he exercises himself. Through this framework of asymmetric power it was easier to see that both circus and domestic violence employ elements of, or loss of, both balance and control. Control Balance Theory started out as an explanation of criminal behaviours but has been applied to studies of Domestic Violence.⁶ It was these ideas of balance and control, and of pattern and meaning, chiming with our theatrical experience, that we wanted to apply to our artist book 'Not Thinking about the Circus at the Circus'.

Wanting there to be many possibilities in the arrangement of the pages and format of the book, we echoed the sinuous, unconstrained movements and the simultaneous feel of the performance with a very long concertina format with additional tipped-in pages. Restrictions imposed by the binding of the erratic off-balance tipped-in pages mimics both the control of the body required to perform circus, and the aspects of control that pervade domestic violence in a system that is asymmetric and out of balance. After deciding to use the binding as a controlling factor that limits the reader's freedom from complete movement of the pages, we also had to think of how the individual page could be used.

In 2021 Gwenn had found time to develop the drawings from that night, using etching, relief printing and monoprint. She created bleed prints in blood colour for the cover and a grey ground with discordant pale yellow and further blood red for the inside pages. The text, hand-stamped in acrobatic sweeps by Angela, was added last, but revisits the shape of the writing and drawing in the dark. It follows the movement of Gwenn's images and is occasionally cramped to the edges of the print or appears to fall. Unlike victims of domestic violence who are often unable to control a fall, falling is a theatrical skill practiced in circus for maximum effect but minimum injury.

Notes

- ¹ *Letters on Cruelty, The Theatre and its Double*, Antonin Artaud, translated from the French by Mary Caroline Richards, Grove Press, NY 1958, p. 102
- ² <https://dailyreview.com.au/circas-when-one-door-closes-la-boite-brisbane/>
- ³ *The Empty Space*, Peter Brook, Penguin Books, London 1990, p. 11
- ⁴ "...something akin to the musical state must have existed for this mise en scene where everything that is a conception of the mind is only a pretext, a virtuality whose double has produced this intense stage poetry, this many-hued spatial language." *The Theatre and its Double*, Antonin Artaud, p. 63, http://www.alchemists.com/fb/theatre_its_double.pdf, accessed 10 Jan 2023
- ⁵ *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, entry, Tittle, Charles R.: Control Balance Theory, SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, 2010, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412959193.n262>, pp. 958–961 accessed 7 Jan 2023
- ⁶ "Whether control is thought of as a mechanism or as a motivation for violence, there are clear indications that socialization of gender adds to nuance and complexity of IPV and the sex gap in offending." – Assessing Intimate Partner Violence in a Control Balance Theory Framework, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 2020, Vol. 35(3-4) 600–622, Erin D. Castro, Matt R. Nobles, and Egbert Zavala.

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About the authors

Angela Gardner's verse novel *The Sorry Tale of the Mignonette*, (Shearsman, 2021), was short-listed for Wales Book of the Year 2022 and a UK National Poetry Day recommendation. She has six poetry collections including *Some Sketchy Notes on Matter* (Recent Work Press, 2020), which was shortlisted for the Dorothy Hewett Award, and the Thomas Shapcott Prize-winning *Parts of Speech* (UQP, 2007). A practicing artist, her visual work is held in National and International public collections. Gwenn Tasker is a practicing artist who has been exhibiting since 2006. She graduated from Queensland College of Art (Griffith University) in 2009 with a BA Fine Art (Hons 1A), and the University Medal. She has been a finalist in both the Artspace Mackay Libris Artist Book Award and the Freemantle National Print Award. Her work is held in national and International public collections. Both artists are part of the NightLadder Collective, within which a focus on the artist book has become an integral and important part of the collective's collaborative creative work.



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Photography, Kinesis, Environment

ESSAYS ON EARTH

Linear A

Ellis-Wolseley-Kane

Abstract

Art by Brodie Ellis and John Wolseley, poetry by Paul Kane.

ESSAYS ON EARTH: LINEAR A

Ellis–Wolseley–Kane



1

Brodie Ellis has a sound file to accompany this paper. Thanks to its file size, it is presented separately.

On Earth

Nor does it escape me how obscure this all appears.

—Lucretius

I hardly know where to begin, here,
in the midst of life, moving towards the end.

At every season of the year, the water
in the stream below turns and turns again

at the same points, as if it were the same
water not flowing but in suspension.



2

That's how I feel: yes, time flows by
but I'm suspended above it, or in it,

always moving but never displaced,
like some magic trick or optical illusion.

And then, when sunlight falls on the streaming
surface, the razzle-dazzle is almost

too much to take in, light leaping beyond
perception, the eyes unable to hold it long

enough in the mind to comprehend it as real.
What we see is real in the moment we

see it, even if it resolves into something else—
that optical illusion again—erased

by reality as the mind scrambles to make sense
of what doesn't make sense, pure perception.

Take, for instance, the flickering shadows
on this page as I write (yes, pencil on paper):

I know it's the shadow of leaves on the trees
outside my five-sided window in the dormer

above me, branches moving in the morning breeze,
their leaves casting random patterns I have to ignore

to write, but which my eyes take in regardless.
Am I not affected? It's a noir film, out of focus,

playing on the surface of my table, nature's Netflix.



Perhaps what I write is influenced by it,

as much as by the view of the green field
when I look up, or further up, at the hawk

that floats in and out of the view the window frames.
Already I can see that what I'm writing

mimics what I'm writing about: the drift
of time that is like the play of thought across

a field of feeling, as if they were one
and the same—or rather, one and the different.

Yesterday I read back through my journal,
the current one, and marked the passages

that had content other than meteorological
observations and laundry lists of daily life.

How few there were, as if words aren't to be
trusted for recording my secret life

but only for what my life seems to secrete:
details, observations, notes in passing,

the stuff that interests no one, not even
me, except as a dutiful record of

how my life drained away over time
like the stream losing itself in the wetlands.



But scattered around in that rill, rocks
and large stones, some smoothed by friction,

stand out, while others, submerged, help determine
the course of the stream, shaping it even

as the larger rocks break the surface and
give character to what is observed.

The banks have changed, eroded or built up
with silt, but it's the same rivulet, as

anyone who knew it before would recognize.
Only, at times, in the fall, it dries up

and is just a ditch then of stones and sand.
I could allegorize it and say that's what

a life is like, when time stops flowing through it.



5

But why should this interest you—not *me*, you?

Surely you have better things to do than read
this, or most things that get written or—alas—

published. A former friend, a novelist,
once refused to meet me at The Strand,
with its miles of books. “The futility
of it all!” he cried, thinking of all those
supernumerary authors no one reads.
Famous though he was, he confided what
we both knew, that he was “second-rate.”
But one has to make a living, and just think
of those first-rate writers who didn’t.
They’d be legion, if only there were legions.
Even poetry, the most useless art, is swamped
and sinking under its own weight, a veritable
Raft of the Medusa, now that all the greats
are gone and we’re in a post-great world,
waving frantically at the receding vessels.
Better to be nobody, says Dickinson,
but that’s not so easy, as Somebody lurks
in the shade hoping to become Nobody.



This onion is like a Gordian knot,
and no peeling away can ever untie it.

Certainly you can slice an onion and cut
a knot, but you can't destroy a metaphor

(even a badly mixed one), for they are
governed, as it were, by the first law of

thermodynamics—since poetry is its own
system and “was all written before time was,”

as one of its Masters holds (hence, Nobody).
But wait, shouldn't I then exhort you to

let the light of understanding illuminate
not these words you're reading but

you who are reading them, since they are for
you because you already possess them?

After all, they come from a common alphabet,
the ABC of being, and they only ask

to stay with you awhile, to remind you
gently that you are author and reader

of whatever poem you live by or for.



7

I could stop here, with that sententious remark,

since endings are most satisfying when
resolutions are struck in a major key.

But I wouldn't want to leave you thinking
that an augmentation of being is simply

an increase in consciousness, though perhaps
you wouldn't ever think that, so my concern

is misplaced, but still, I should say—if only
for the record, or for Gabriel, recording angel,

who may or may not be paying attention—
that this inner life we're so vague about

has to increase and become increasingly
finer and more precisely understood

if we are to withstand the shock of our
death, when who and what we are no longer

can depend on the body for living, but
is carried by our being for a time—if

time there is—until something enduring
is built which doesn't exist for us now,

and may never, unless we attend to it
in the present. How's that for a credo?

Do you have a better? Of course you do,
otherwise you would be me and I you.



I wish I could organize a trope from nature
to illustrate my point or intuition, but

nature is cyclic and seems eternal already
in our world—the hesperis that is blooming

like crazy in the woods and fields around me
comes reliably every Memorial Day,

thousands of delicate white and purple flowers
that blend together like a Persian carpet

or millefleur tapestry, image of fecundity
and source of joyous thanksgiving for

being alive at this very moment in spring.
What does all that have to do with death?

Re-birth, yes. But nature doesn't die, it just
keeps changing, cycling through its seasons

day by day, year by ever-changing year.
Naturally, nature is linear, too, with lots of

beginnings and endings, but it bends in the end,
like light warped by a gravitational field,

coming round again like a rhyme revealed.



We, too, live by cycles, within cycles, from
the alternations of the heart and lungs to
the diurnal routines of just getting on,
and if you watch a calligraphic master draw
an enzo, a Zen circle, in a single
sweep, you can see that beginning and end
meet, as if birth to death were a cycle too,
and re-birth or reincarnation the cyclic
form of a spiral or a Yeatsian cone,
turning and turning towards a single point—
call it liberation or nirvana but not
heaven, since that is a destination meant
for the destined few at the end of a road,
something that goes from point A and stops at B.
For Christians, there has only ever been one
re-birth, a resurrection—every other simply
metaphoric, or, if literal, then on
a different plane from our plain one
rooted in the natural world, in which we think
about the supernatural, though skeptical
as hell. So, images from nature just don't
cut it, which seems an impoverishment for
poetry, a cutting off of its lifeblood.



10

You can see Shelley struggling with it at
Mont Blanc, veering towards allegory,

like Dante (but not Milton, the true
literalist of the imagination).

The “as above, so below” of Trismegistus,
or the prayer’s “on earth as it is in heaven,”

is the formula for analogizing
spirit, since it’s not reversible like

a down vest or palindrome or balance sheet.
No one prays that things in heaven be

like they are on earth, or what’s a heaven for?
Religion without religion was the cry

not long ago, like having your Eucharist
and eating it too. O, the thirst for the divine,

if only we could get rid of God, or at least
Mr. God, who bedevils our spiritual life,

that ghost in the machine of the universe.
We need a *deus ex machina* to descend

and save us from the knot we've tied ourselves in,
being spiritual but not religious, yet

unable to disentangle the two without
Occam's razor cutting us to the bone.



11

Perhaps Kafka was right that there's
"an infinite amount of hope—but not for us,"

since we're nihilistic thoughts in God's head.
The problem is that we can't get God out

of our heads, or hearts, however we
banish Him or Her or They in the name of truth.

Let us have divinity sans Divinity,
which is to say, reason without logic, or

the word without the Logos, lux without fiat.
It won't do, I'm afraid, and not just because

everyone has a God, no matter how secular
or nihilistic or realistic the point of view.

Everyone believes in something—the red-headed
flicker outside the window believes in grubs.

Tell me what you do and I'll tell you what
or who you worship: your God has a name.



12

Right now, I believe in Dame Rocket, whose
flowers by the thousands make a mockery

of my overgrown perennial garden.
Like Newton playing with seashells on the shore,

oblivious of the ocean just beyond,
I retreat to my fenced-in vegetables

(though lupine has set up shop there too)
and tend the little beds, creating order,

while all about me is a riot of blooms.
I count out the seeds I plant in rows

expecting my nightly salad to sprout,
producing leaves and herbs I'll happily pick.

How wonderfully ordered and narrow
this garden I maintain so diligently,

as if it were reason itself I cultivate.
Meanwhile, Dame Rocket luxuriates

in a chaos of beauty beyond control.



13

Still, I wouldn't want to make out of nature

a God (that romantic trope so delicious
to nosh on). And as for God in nature, that's

a slippery slope we've rolled down before, ending
up at the bottom, dizzy and slightly bruised,

if exhilarated. I, too, have known "the one Life
within us and abroad," in moments suffused

with ineffable sanctity and the sacred,
have felt in my heart the oneness with life

as transparently divine, both fulfilling
and annihilating, and have thought later

such is the goal of spiritual life on earth.
And who wouldn't want to live in pure Being?

Who would turn away from the radiance?
It is natural to be one with nature,

it is in our nature just as nature is in us.
It would do the world a world of good if

we all lived with that feeling in our bones,
for we would repair the damage we've done

or at least refrain from compounding the harm.
That would be climate change, changing the climate

of opinion, acknowledging our dependence
on nature's interdependence with us.



14

How noticeable it is, in this hiatus
of the pandemic, that birdsong has become

ubiquitous, as if we never noticed it
before our sequestration, as if birds

were calling out to us to see, to hear,
what life is like when humans withdraw for a space.

There is much to be said for oneness,
yet what is organic nature in the universe but

an oddity, a lucky chance it seems, a hap.
The laws that govern the stars have no need

of nature, the earthly sort, though doubtless
there are other kinds—or, if we doubt that, then

at least it's possible against all the odds.
If it's life we're after, it must be beyond

biology or design, a force instead,
a power more than mere momentum, as

the Big Bang is surely the ultimate
memento mori, or *momento mori*.

What has a beginning has an end, no
matter how long the middle—ask any

red giant, its hydrogen spent, its fusion
finished, lumbering along in the celestial forest

destined to meet up with the white dwarf at last.
What's behind it all? Is there a figure

in the carpet? An elegant equation perhaps or
an ultimate algorithm? Or just a roll

of the dice? It's so lame to say we don't know,
that we're unaware of our ignorance, that it's all

truly beyond us. The answer to Job is
no comfort—as Jung, scandalized, well knew—

because we know we're capable of knowing more.



15

There are laws at work and axioms we've figured

out, at least as they pertain to this universe
(though not perhaps to others that may exist,

if 'exist' has any meaning when meaning
itself may not exist but only be asserted).

Perhaps this accounts, in part, for why
radical writers so often subside into

orthodoxy. It's certainly understandable.
Wordsworth, Southey, Schlegel, Dostoevsky,

Koestler, Eliot, even Wilde on his deathbed.
And the list of Catholic converts is longer.

Perhaps Job became a Republican?
The pull of stability, ritual, sacred

history, and the mystery of incarnation
may seem a refuge, though it's a sojourn too.

Mystery often seems the acknowledgment

of a boundless unknowing, and prayer

an acceptance that we cannot unknow
the unknowing, but only bow to it, like Job.



16

But always a countercurrent swirls
in the eddies, like pockets of resistance,

not a rage against dying light but an
inner conviction that the dark is hiding

something, that there's more matter than we can
account for in the universe, that lightning

flashes apprise us of a terrain we can't
quite see, but which remains an afterimage

in the brain, as if the optic nerve has had
a nervous breakdown and we a panic attack.

We keep getting thrown back on our own devices,
which are sharp-edged and bruising, the landing hard.

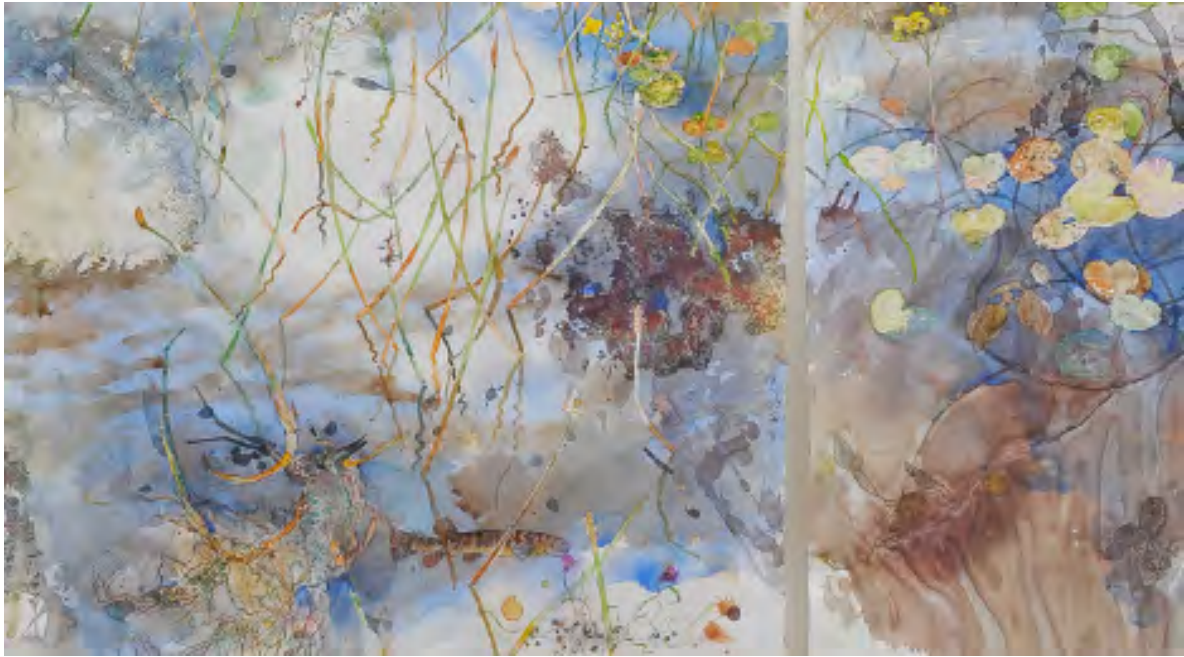
We look around to see if someone might help but
friendship, says Emerson, "like the immortality

of the soul, is too good to be believed." But then
the soul is not a given so can't be taken

away—what doesn't exist has to be
created, which is to say, first imagined

and then made real, like any other
endeavor that takes a lifetime to complete

(our own lives being the best example).



17

Let's not stop at oneness, then, for that is
still sublunary—even to moon walkers
looking back at our blue and white marble globe.

Beyond oneness is a singularity
of infinite value, as mathematicians
might say (if they were given to such sayings),
and which might lead to another sort of
unity, first of oneself and then of purpose,
aligned with the force that drives this cosmos.

For that we must be free, of ourselves and
of what binds us to the world, though that is
still a start, even if, for spiritual life,
it's an end, and not one that's gained by death,
unless it be the death the sages call for.
To die to the world before we die in it,

that would be an accomplishment, not for us,
who would not be there to take credit,

but for the universe as a hole into
which we have been dropped or thrown, emerging

at last as a whole of the whole shebang.



18

Oneness, then, is a way station on the path

to unbinding our bondage to nature—
of which we are part—a manumission

in the name of a Great Nature, which is part
of us, and other than or more than

the visible world, and the invisible, too,
of which we know precious little except

hints, hunches, possibilities, and mostly
impossibilities—that weird world which dabblers

think of as the Beyond, inhabited by
creatures in a motley of confusion

seemingly ordered at times, à la Yeats
or Merrill, Swedenborg or Blake or any

of a myriad of mystics, initiates, saints,
or just plain folk who stumble into

that realm and never quite get free of it,
where religiosity can be a form of PTSD

at worst, though at best, an equanimity.
My own encounters have been too close

for comfort, surprised to discover
malevolency as well as well-wishing,

a spitting eye of hate in the midst of love.
But let's not go there, as the saying goes,

because we may not make it back in time.
Cleave to the good, it's what we're good for,

and take your time for all it's worth, running
station-to-station so as not to get caught

stealing in a rundown between bases.
It's not a game, to be sure, and game theory

won't help, as what passes for rationality
is a far cry from the laws that determine us,

provoking near cries as well as far ones.



Perhaps by beginning this essay with not
knowing where to begin, I was uttering
a cry, a more modern invocation
of the muses than the usual homage or prayer.
And rather than choose one Muse, I find all nine
touch upon what I have written: history,
lyric, love, comedy (though little tragedy
or epic) but certainly astronomy,
the sacred, pastoral, and even some dance,
as all nine move in and out to the steps
the caller cries, making figures that resolve
finally into a kind of contra-dance,
an enneagram, let's say, that maps out
a secret pattern like the lines of your hand.
Let nine be the magic number, then, for
a very unmagical poem, which nonetheless
looks to this earth for enchantment. Amen.



Work details

All images by John Wolseley: works on paper using watercolours, oils, pen and charcoal.

- 1 *And the fresh Earth beams forth ten thousand springs of life II, (Blake)* (detail 2) 2003
- 2 *The Life of Inland Waters – Durabudboi River* 2018 (detail 1)
- 3 *After fire: spiny-cheeked honeyeater at Lake Monibeong*, 2009–11
- 4 *Bulwutja in the Durabudboi River*, 2015
- 5 *An Inventory of the Plants of the Maquis, no.1*, 2008
- 6 *Scrambling, Climbing, Flying and Moving Through the Cobboboonee Forest* (detail) 2006-09
- 7 *Inscape – Lives of the Whipstick longicorn beetles*, 2019
- 8 *Pison des arbres, singing above Picasso's grave, Vauvenargues* 2008
- 9 *The Life of Inland Waters – Durabudboi River* 2018 (detail 2)
- 10 *Camel Gate: Border Track: SA/VIC* (detail) 2007
- 11 *Ritharr and Dhunguruk* (detail) 2015
- 12 *Entomology of a salt lake – Maree S.A* (detail). 2014
- 13 *And the fresh Earth beams forth ten thousand springs of life II, (Blake)* 2003 (detail 1)
- 14 *The Life of Inland Waters – Durabudboi River* 2018 (detail 3)
- 15 *Isopogen frot, Royal National Park* 2002
- 16 *Natural history of a sphagnum bog, Lake Ina, Tasmania* 2013
- 17 *Natural history of a sphagnum bog, Lake Ina, Tasmania* 2013 (detail 3)
- 18 *Cordillera Patagonia with glacier striae rubbings* 1994–96
- 19 *Godwits in flight* (detail) 2010
- 20 *Nymphaea Lilies and Rakay*, 2015

Contextual statement

Essays on Earth: Linear A is an interpretation of a multimedia exhibition by the artists Brodie Ellis and John Wolseley, based on *Earth, Air, Water, Fire* (2022), a series of ‘verse essays’ by the American poet Paul Kane. This immersive exhibit (to be staged at the Bendigo Art Gallery) projects moving images of Wolseley’s painting and Ellis’s photography on the gallery walls while a recording of the poem plays simultaneously, the arts forms interweaving and in-flowing together as one—like, in Ellis’s words, ‘a mountainous Japanese scroll slowly unraveling.’ The paintings and sculptures will be shown in two gallery spaces leading to a third gallery devoted to the video installation. The *Axon* presentation here—a two-dimensional rendering of this project—stands as an invitation to deep reading and, by extension, deep seeing. Like all such endeavors, it is intended to elicit a process of *kinesis*, whereby the viewer/reader responds to a stimulus with emotional and intellectual activity that is as much subconscious as conscious, seeking to complete the arc of the work in more than three dimensions: as if time were suspended in an imagistic flow that enwraps one, moment by expanding moment.

In providing the framework for this presentation, Brodie Ellis—a multidisciplinary artist whose video installations include *Contact and Witness* (2019) and *The Crystal World* (2016), and who has long been involved with social and environmental issues in her artwork—connects her own work with parallel concerns of Wolseley and Kane in a three-way combination of text, image and sound. The audio file included here suggests the pace at which the poem and images are to be encountered and allowed to emerge together. Ellis’s video instantiation, in its artful blend of progression and retardation, enhances this sense of intermittent flow.

As a backdrop, it is worth noting that over the last thirty years John Wolseley’s work ‘has been a search to discover how we dwell and move within landscape.’ As he puts it, he operates as ‘a hybrid mix of artist and scientist; one who tries to relate the minutiae of the natural world—leaf, feather and beetle wing—to the abstract dimensions of the earth’s dynamic systems.’ Known for his large works on paper, Wolseley uses ‘techniques of watercolour, collage, frottage, nature printing and other methods of direct physical or kinetic contact’ as a way of ‘collaborating with the actual plants, birds, trees, rocks and earth of a particular place.’ In the gallery version of *Essays on Earth*, his large works grow even larger on the walls, and details arise that are like fractals in which the minute mimics the maximal, the world suddenly connected in a comprehensive pattern that is scalable large and small. That pattern also mimics the flow of Kane’s verse as it cascades auditorily. The interleaving of images among the verses gestures towards a comprehensive vision in the key of a linear mode.

According to Antonella Reim and Tony Hughes-D’Aeth, in *Ecosustainable Narratives* (2022), Paul Kane’s ‘verse essays’ are ‘in the tradition of Lucretius, Pope, Auden and Ashbery’ for the way the poetry embraces ‘shifting points of view, including environmental, ecological, mythological, historical, and phenomenological perspectives.’ The verse, while ‘philosophically serious’, is also ‘at times, witty and ludic in tone.’ Kane, who divides his time between New York and central Victoria, has collaborated on a number of projects with artists, photographers, musicians and other poets, including *Renga: 100 Poems* (2018) with John Kinsella. ‘On Earth’ is an extension of the interests and concerns articulated in his ‘Inner Landscapes as Sacred Landscapes’ (*Kenyon Review* 2002), considered a watershed publication in environmental studies. His collaboration with Wolseley is the culmination of an extensive mutual engagement with each other’s work over many years.

While there are three individuals involved in this project, the names should, by all rights, denote a single creative identity: Ellis-Wolseley-Kane.

Works cited

Ellis B 2016 *The Crystal World* (video installation) 55m00s

Ellis B 2019 *Contact and Witness* (video installation) 11m11s

Ellis B, J Wolseley, P Kane 2022 *Earth, Air, Water, Fire* (exhibition). Bendigo Art Gallery, 2022 9 September 2023–14 January 2024

Kane, P 2003 'Inner Landscapes as Sacred Landscapes', *Kenyon Review*, New Series 25, 3–4 (Summer–Autumn): 207–223.

Reim, A and T Hughes-D'Eath 2022 *Ecosustainable Narratives and Partnership Relationships in World Literatures in English*, p. xxii Newcastle UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

About the authors

Brodie Ellis is an Australian multidisciplinary artist living and working on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. She has held numerous exhibitions in commercial galleries and institutions, biennales and artist run spaces. Her art is held in public and private art collections including MONA, Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart. John Wolseley is a painter, printmaker and installation artist, whose work is represented in all the major State galleries and in numerous private collections in Australia and internationally. In 2005 he was made an Honorary Doctor of Science by Macquarie University and was also awarded the Visual Art Emeritus Award by the Australia Council. A major monograph, *John Wolseley: Land Marks* by Sasha Grishin, was reissued in 2006. Paul Kane is an American poet whose work has been widely published in the US, Australia, Europe and China. The recipient of numerous awards, he received the Order of Australia in 2022 for 'significant service to literature, particularly through the promotion of Australian arts, poetry, and emerging talent.' He divides his time between New York and Central Victoria.



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Printing

EVERY BOOK ITS READER

Quarantine Public Library

Katie Garth and Tracy Honn

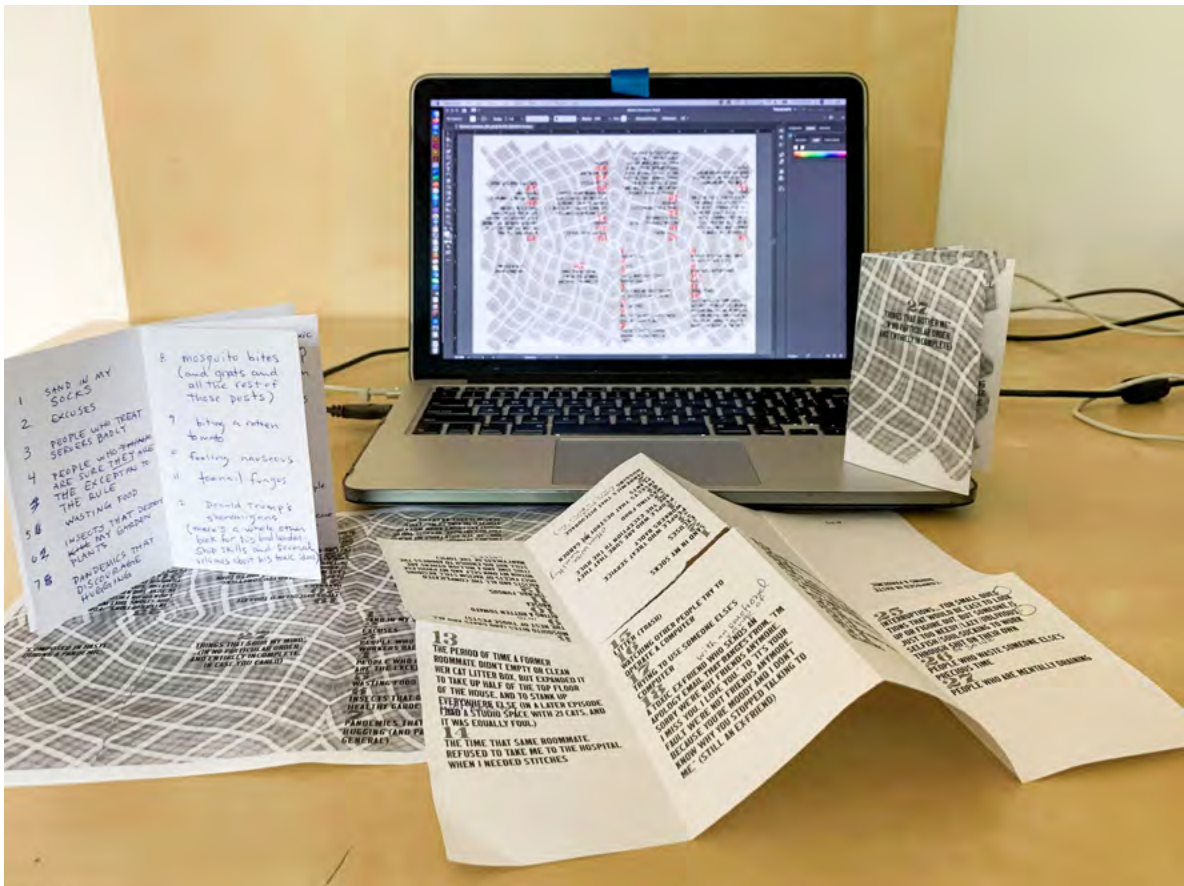
Abstract

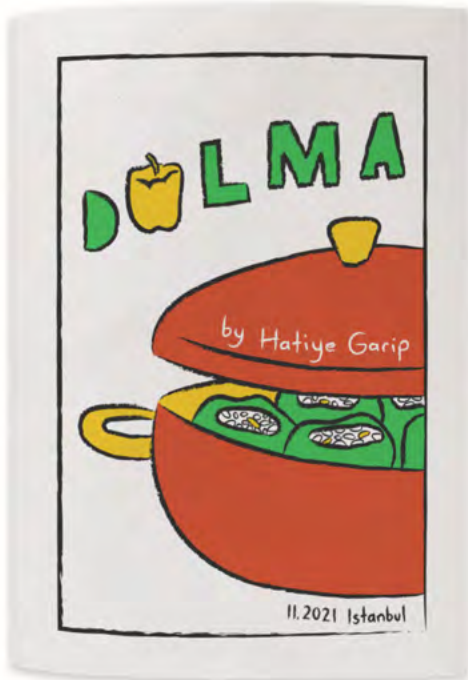
Quarantine Public Library is a US-based repository of books made by artists, which Tracy Honn and Katie Garth established in July 2020. The books in the library are for anyone to freely download, print and assemble—to keep or give away.





3 4



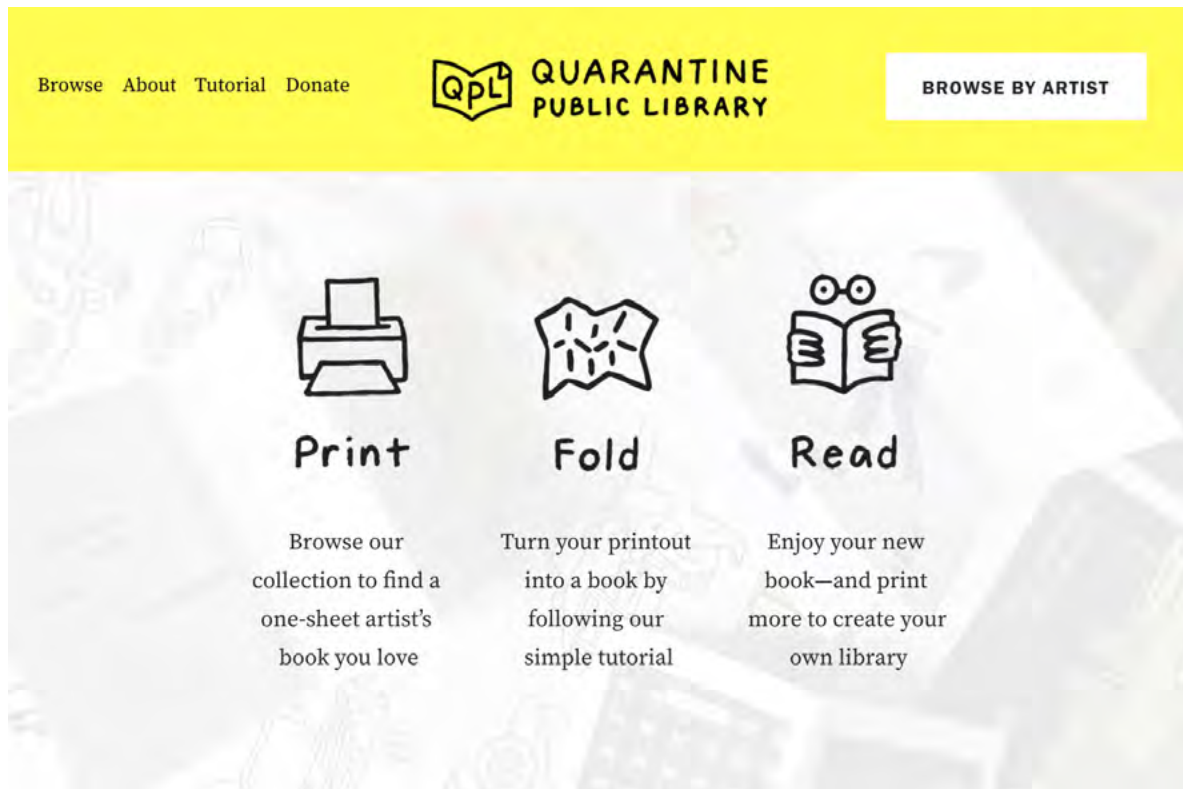




6

7





8

List of works

- 1 An overlapping spread of QPL books. Center: “Money, Gold and Glass Diamonds” by Alexandria Couch.
- 2 QPL as represented in “Drawing Us Together: Public Life and Public Health in Contemporary Comics,” an exhibition at Harvard’s Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study in Fall 2022.
- 3 A visitor at Detroit’s Power of the Press Fest holds *i am here to* by Kalyn Fay Barnoski. The QPL display was created and exhibited by Library contributor Lynne Avadenka. Photograph by Gabby Baginski.
- 4 Studio documentation from QPL contributor Kathleen O’Connell of her book in progress.
- 5 (From top left): Hatiye Garip, *Dolma*; Allie Webb, *Kitchen*; Roy Willingham, *Yes, you!*; Ampersand Duck (Caren Florence), *Dear Future*.
- 6 Pages 3 and 6 of *Stay at Home* by Hai-Hsin Huang..
- 7 Pages 2–3 of *Bird Watching* by Gilad Seliktar.
- 8 The [Quarantine Public Library homepage](#).

Quarantine Public Library (QPL) was created in direct response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. We are book artists and printmakers, and, accordingly, are acutely familiar with the rhetoric of print as stalwart and virtuous; print is perceived by many to be an important representative of stability and history in information technology and material culture. This does not prevent us from recognizing what digital circulation does well, namely that it moves rapidly, with less expense and—crucially—without the cumbersome physical limitations of more traditional distribution methods.

As a printing history educator with a long career at a working museum housed inside a library (Tracy) and a former web designer (Katie), we feel strongly about the potential for libraries to create connection. These values allowed us to recognize that the inherent physicality of print and the communal aspect of the Internet could work together to accommodate an unmet need during a strange new time. In hindsight, before the dawn of the pandemic, theoretical conversations we entertained about print in a post-digital world seem quaint. It was, and has been, an obvious time for print-on-demand to find new footing.

The kernel of QPL was an old idea Tracy had shared with Katie for an exhibit of desktop-printed books that relied on a one sheet, 8-page book format—a structure that is simple to make, yet surprisingly elegant. The idea resurfaced during one of many phone calls we had early on in the pandemic. We began to discuss how a project like this might appeal to: artists hoping their work could be seen on something other than a screen; audiences stuck at home wishing they could go to a museum, bookstore, or gallery; and anyone, whether contributor or visitor, who needed something to do that felt concrete and pleasurable. We decided to make it happen as soon as possible. (As we began serious construction of the project in May 2020, we actually wondered if we might possibly be launching our project in a post-COVID world.)

Quarantine Public Library is the resulting project. The site launched on July 15, 2020 and offers more than 200 curated titles by a variety of invited artists and scholars. Each title is available to download and print on a standard home printer, and we offer several tutorials to help users complete their chosen book(s). We sell a megapack of the collection, with proceeds from that and other digital purchases supporting EveryoneOn, a non-profit furthering information equity in low-income communities. At the time of writing, QPL has raised nearly \$3,000 and has been viewed over 170,000 by visitors from more than 100 countries; the project has also amassed over 4,000 Instagram followers.

Those visits, and the feedback we received from them, lifted our spirits and gave us a sense of purpose during a difficult time. But we were also pleased by other responses—namely those from strangers across the world who lobbied to be featured in the collection, and/or said “yes” when invited to participate. One such stranger was Caren Florance, editor of this issue of AXON, who asked us to contribute to this issue after publishing her work in the Library. Others hailed from Finland, Mexico, South Africa, Taiwan, and more than a dozen other countries. The global reach of the project surprised and encouraged us.

We might have anticipated this reaction to QPL, given that the pandemic was itself an experience without borders, but we were overwhelmed by the size of the response. Initial invitees were mostly friends and colleagues from whom it felt less daunting to ask the favor of donating their work; by the project’s end in December 2021, we had each met dozens of artists whom we had either long admired, or were totally and excitingly new to us. And many of them then came to know each other, too:

I wish you a happy New Year. I hope 2022 will be a year full of new opportunities, good health and joy. Thanks for building the Quarantine Public Library. It is such a great idea and one of the highlights of the past year. I learned to know artists that were unfamiliar to me. So, good on you!

Marnix Everheart, January 2, 2022

We can't know for certain how many visitors have actually printed and made books, but the number we have seen is significant to us—and we know that some physical copies are included in library special collections, and catalogued in WorldCat. Several library contributors even organized exhibitions which, later on in the pandemic, brought the collection into shared physical spaces like festivals and galleries.

We were thrilled to see the circulation of the project enhanced by media outlets like *Poets & Writers* and *Forbes*, as well as recognized by our peers and beloved institutions like the Center for Book Arts. In January 2023 the Library of Congress added Quarantine Public Library to the [Zine Web Archive](#). Perhaps our favorite feature was written by Steven Heller, who upon the site's launch, summarized the project aptly: "**Books as first responders.**"

Afterword

We started Quarantine Public Library during the height of the pandemic in 2020, and continued to add publications through 2021. The work felt like an essential service, if only for ourselves; the regular ongoing labor of producing it—with new books launching every two months—steadied our anxiety and focussed our attention on something practical and useful. QPL was born of urgency. Its timing made it meaningful for people in the world right then, as we were all similarly shellshocked, newly humbled, and mostly limited to the confines of our homes. Though the pandemic continues to unfold, there is no longer the same sense of unity. Now, life is hard and confusing in new ways—are we experiencing the transition to endemic COVID, or just weary of admitting that it persists?—and we are less sure about bringing the tools we used in the project to the experience of late 2022. COVID hasn't gone away, and while vaccines have increased our safety they have not eradicated the risk, complications, or death from infection. We don't know what's coming next. This queasy period of familiar dread is pernicious and mostly invisible. We just live with it.

The lack of closure around the pandemic itself made it difficult for us to know for certain when we should stop publishing new titles. But as we came to terms with the vague perseverance of the crisis, and as society began to move on, we decided it was time to end the project. We published a round of books by artists outside the United States as our final release in December 2021 as a way to acknowledge the global nature of the pandemic, and our asynchronous experiences around it. The site is still live, and we are working to ensure it is optimized for future archiving, so it can always remain open to the public.

We share a residual satisfaction about the pleasure of making QPL that feels solid, though we are aware of its absence. We miss how vital it felt even as we recognize the complex reasons why it no longer seems that way. At times, it feels like ending the project is accepting the state of the world with all its outcomes, avoidable or not. We are peaceful, though sad, about having brought the project to a close.

Works cited

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Honn, T & K Garth, 2020-22 Quarantine Public Library, <https://www.quarantinepubliclibrary.com/> accessed 11 June 2023.

US Library of Congress, Zine Web Archive, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/zine-web-archive/about-this-collection/> accessed 11 June 2023.

About the authors

Katie Garth is a print-based artist in Philadelphia. Her interdisciplinary work explores tedium as a coping mechanism for uncertainty, and often reflects her interests in language and independent publication. Garth received her MFA in Printmaking from the Tyler School of Art and a BFA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she was Tracy Honn's printing assistant at the Silver Buckle Press. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, and her work has appeared in the Washington Post and Print Magazine. She is Visiting Assistant Professor of Printmaking at Sarah Lawrence College and teaches at several Philadelphia area-universities.

Tracy Honn is a printing history educator, curator, and letterpress printer living in Madison, Wisconsin. She is senior artist emerit from University of Wisconsin-Madison where she directed the Silver Buckle Press, a working museum of letterpress printing. Honn oversaw the transfer of the SBP collection to Hamilton Wood Type & Printing Museum in 2016. In 2020 she co-curated "Speaking of Book Arts; Oral Histories from UW-Madison" at the Chazen Museum of Art. The exhibition featured artists' books from the Kohler Art Library with audio excerpts from book arts interviews conducted by UW Archives Oral History Program with book arts alum and instructors from UW. Honn is president of the board of directors for Hamilton Wood Type & Printing Museum.

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Independent Publishing, Drawing, Text
Art, Collage, COVID -19 Art, Collaboration,
Untethered Artmaking

RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN

Nicci Haynes



Downloadable publication instructions

There is a separate file for this author which has the imposed pages for a 2-up 20pp booklet.

Print the pages of this file back to back on A4 (or A3) paper using a printer or photocopier. The file is Landscape orientation, and should flip at the short edge. Once printed, fold the bundle in half, short ends together, and press the spine with something firm (handle of a dinner knife, or back of a wooden spoon) to form an A5 (or A4) booklet. Bind by stapling, tying or sewing if desired.

RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN

Nicci Haynes

The zine 'Run as fast as you can' is made from out-takes of a 2020 lock-down project, which was to finish – and for that matter, begin – an overdue Brooklyn Art Library Sketchbook Project: participants receive a blank sketchbook and return it when complete.¹ My sketchbook, in the form of an A6 notebook, had sat for more than a year for several reasons: I was unsure what approach to take as it felt a little too formal for a zine, too informal for an artist book, and at 36 pages it was also long. Not that I can't easily fill that number of pages, but reproducing it becomes expensive unless you have access to a free photocopier, and part of the ethos of zines is that they are sold cheaply. They are made for love, not for profit, an attribute that appeals to me, since to spend a lot of time making a thing that's not part of any commercial imperative feels like an act of defiance against a cultural backdrop of financial value as a primary metric. At Melbourne's Sticky Institute, a shop and resource devoted entirely to zines, anything above \$10 is considered pricey.² There is no advertising in the zine world. You can't go viral with a zine.

In the end I took a zine approach, that is to say, I began making with no outcome in mind. I had drawings from my note-book, a set of slick-stick paint crayons, 'suitable from aged 3', to test, which have the texture of lipstick. The completed sketchbook, 'One day during lockdown' is digitised in the Brooklyn Art Library.³

The residue from 'One day during lockdown' turned into the shorter 'Run as fast as you can'. Cobbled together from photocopied pages, drawings on paper scraps tacked together with masking tape and found text fragments, it is unquestionably a zine. Many of the drawings are faces captured from Zoom meetings with a pen that you dip in ink: the lack of control combined with speed makes the faces distorted, which, while not being entirely intentional, also suited the mood of the moment, so then I exaggerated that look. The title, 'Run as fast as you can' comes from words penned on a post-it-note randomly stuck to the wall of the art studio where I work. I don't know the author's intention, but its tone was more desperation than a call to athleticism and suited the spirit of the zine.

I like zines, they are fun to make and their lack of any sort of convention is liberating. My zine collection contains ones that are hand-drawn, screen-printed, simple and elaborate: a paper bag cover with taped-on plastic fork, a cut-out and make-your-own-banana, a tiny little booklet, a fold-out A1 page, comic strips and a complicated origami arrangement.

Untethering art-making from expectations allows moments of creativity to be captured in their messy, spontaneous randomness, which is how I prefer create as I am more interested in showing the process of thinking rather than in executing a plan. The resulting DIY rawness looks distinctive against a backdrop of elegant, printed material and the untidiness feels subversive in an environment where it is possible, and probably preferable for most tastes, to make a thing look perfect and planned when most bits of life are none of those things. Living is chaotic, unpredictable, and provisional and I'd rather reflect that, to embody the idea in the material. William Kentridge, in an interview 'How we make sense of the world', says 'uncertainty of images is much closer to how the world is'.⁴ Sticky Institute's staffer Beck says, 'The scrappier a zine is, the more we tend to love it'⁵ – perhaps for similar reasons: it was made by a human, and we are pretty scrappy on the whole.

My zine is not 'about' anything, other than an encounter with these materials, these images, at this time. To return to William Kentridge: talking about his hand-drawn films in the same interview, he says 'The only meaning they have in advance is the need for the film to exist'.⁶

I also don't feel the need to make a batch of identical zines like objects from a production line – often my zines will be *alike*, but individually modified with collage or drawing. Mostly I reproduce a zine on a photocopier but often they are also created on the photocopier, collaging, cutting, overprinting, photocopying drawings and drawing on photocopies; thinking and rethinking, drawing and redrawing.

I'm not sure that the digitized version of 'Run as fast as you can' for 'AXON' qualifies as a zine since the essential quality of a zine is that it should be physical thing to hold. The following pages allow you to print your own copy, which will be a zine.

Notes

- 1 <https://brooklynartlibrary.org/>
- 2 <https://www.stickyinstitute.com/>
- 3 Haynes N 2020 'One Day During Lockdown', zine <https://www.sketchbookproject.com/library/S1698242>
- 4 Kentridge W 2014 Interview: 'How We Make Sense of the World', 1 October 2014, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G11wOmxoJ6U> (Accessed 30 June 2023)
- 5 Lewin, A and TCC Scott, 2018 Sticky Institute, (est 2001) in Tales of Bricks and Mortar (blog) <https://talesofbrickandmortar.com/2018/01/04/sticky-institute-est-2001/> (Accessed 30 June 2023)
- 6 Kentridge W interview: 'How We Make Sense of the World', Ibid.

About the artist

Nicci Haynes is a visual artist with a wide-ranging practice that leans towards performance, and includes print, drawing, installation and artist books. Live drawing along with experimental film and animation have become significant components, acting as vehicles for capturing liveness and movement, and accommodating assorted collaborations with dancers, musicians and poets. Nicci lives on Ngunnawal and Ngambri country, is currently Visiting Fellow at Australian National University School of Art & Design and is a tutor at Canberra's Hands On Studio.

MIRO ONLINE

COVID

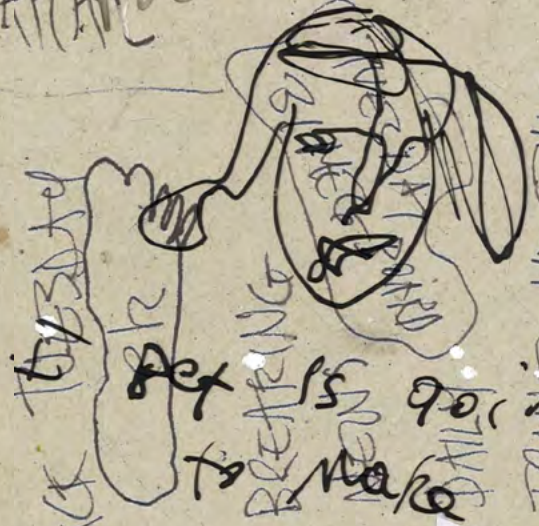


which one is the bagging area?

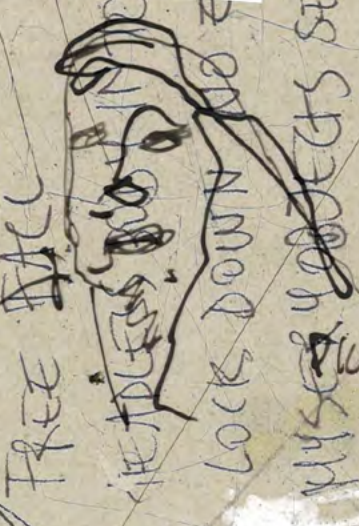
needs a bit of work
IS GOOD NOW

MANAGEMENT

WEEKLY



TRAVEL LIT-STYLE



FREE FAC

LOCKS DOWN

MYSEVERE OBJECTS SEEN IN SKY

Just to be clear
the
work
time ago

lockdown

Hadaway

pool RV



NICCI HAYNES 2023
RUN AS FAST YOU CAN
www.niccihaynes.com



Mechanical Theatre

DOLAN BECK
Living Theatre

the night she in the bedroom but he's there

generates image from



visiting or his program

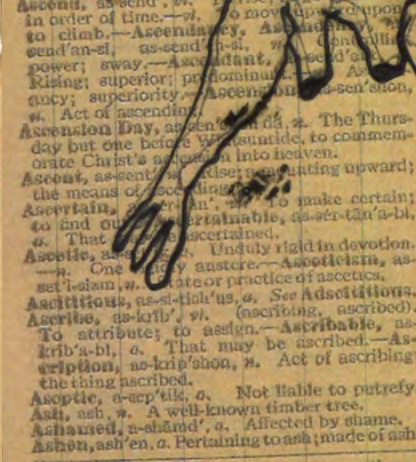
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ема

2 p. diuola role + light
films

(copying)



Assay

ash'ez, n. pl. The dust produced by combustion; the remains of a dead body.

Ashlar, Ashler, ash'ler, n. A falling of stones on a wall-hewn stone.

Ashore, a-shor' adv. or pred. a. On shore.

Ash-Wednesday, ash-wenz'dz, n. The first day of Lent, so called from a custom of sprinkling ashes on the head.

Ashy, ash'i, a. Resembling or composed of ash; ash-i-at'ik, a. Belonging to Asia.

A native of Asia.

A side, a-sid', adv. On one side; apart; at a small distance.

Asinine, as'i-nin, a. Belonging to or rescuing.

Ask, ask, vt. To request; to question; to invite.

Askance, askant, askans', askant', adv. Awry; obliquely.

Askew, a-ské, adv. or pred. a. Awry.

Aslant, a-slant', pred. a. or adv. On slant; obliquely; not perpendicularly.

Asleep, a-slep', pred. a. or adv. Sleeping; at Aslope, a-slop', pred. a. or adv. On slope; obliquely.

Asp, asp, n. A small venomous serpent of Asparagus, as-pa-ra-gus, n. A well-known esculent plant.

Aspect, as'pekt, n. Appearance; situation.

Aspen, asp'en, n. A species of the poplar.

Asperity, as-pe-rí-ti, n. Roughness; harshness.

Asperse, as-pers', vt. (aspering, aspersed). To calumniate; to slander.

Asperion, as-per'ion, n. Calumny.

Asphalt, as-falt', n. A bituminous, hard substance, used for pavement, &c.

Asphaltic, as-falt'ik, a. Pertaining to asphalt.

Aphyall, as-fik'si-a, n. A kind of lily.

Aphyall, as-fik'si-a, n. Suspended animation from suffocation, &c.

Aphyllia, as-fik'si-ty, vt. To bring to a state of aphyllia.

Aspirate, as-pí-rit, vt. (aspiring, aspirated). To pronounce with an audible breath; to add a sound to.

Aspirate, as-pí-rit, vt. An aspirated letter.

Aspire, as-pí-rit, vt. (aspiring, aspired). To aim at high things; to soar.

Aspiringly, as-pí-rit'ing, adv. In an aspiring manner.

Aspirant, as-pí-rit', n. A candidate.

Aspirant, as-pí-rit'shon, n. Ardent desire.

Aspirated sound.

Aspirin, as-pí-rit', n. A white crystalline compound, used as a drug for the salicylic acid liberated from it in the intestines.

Aspirin, as-pí-rit', n. Out of the corner of the eye; obliquely.

Assault, as-sault', vt. To attack; to assault.

Assaultable, as-sault'á-bl, a. That may be assaulted.

Assaultant, as-sault'ant, n. One who assaults.

Assassin, as-as'sin, n. One who kills, or attempts to kill, by surprise or secretly.

Assassinate, as-as'sín-it, vt. (assassinating, assassinated). To murder by surprise or secretly.

Assassination, as-as'sín-á-shon, n. The act of murdering by surprise.

Assaulting, as-sault'ing, n. An attack; a burning; a storm; to storm.

Assaulting, as-sault'ing, n. One who assaults.

Assay, as-say, n. Proof; trial; determination of the quantity of metal in an ore or alloy.

Assay, as-say, n. To try; to ascertain the purity or alloy of.

Assayer, as-say'er, n. One who assays.

Assaying, as-say'ing, n. Act of ascertaining the purity of the precious metals.

FLYSC

суб

about

170

go on it

GARY HILL is the person I meant to remember. Martyn

снять шкуру и превратить ее от порчи

птица обязательно вставляя в клюв
та... звать... его в горло, чтобы вытекаю-
щи... ва... содержимое... не испачкали
пе... е раны... запачканные кровью участки
опе... густо... малом. После этого птицу заво-
рачивают в чистую бумагу и укладывают в сумку или про-

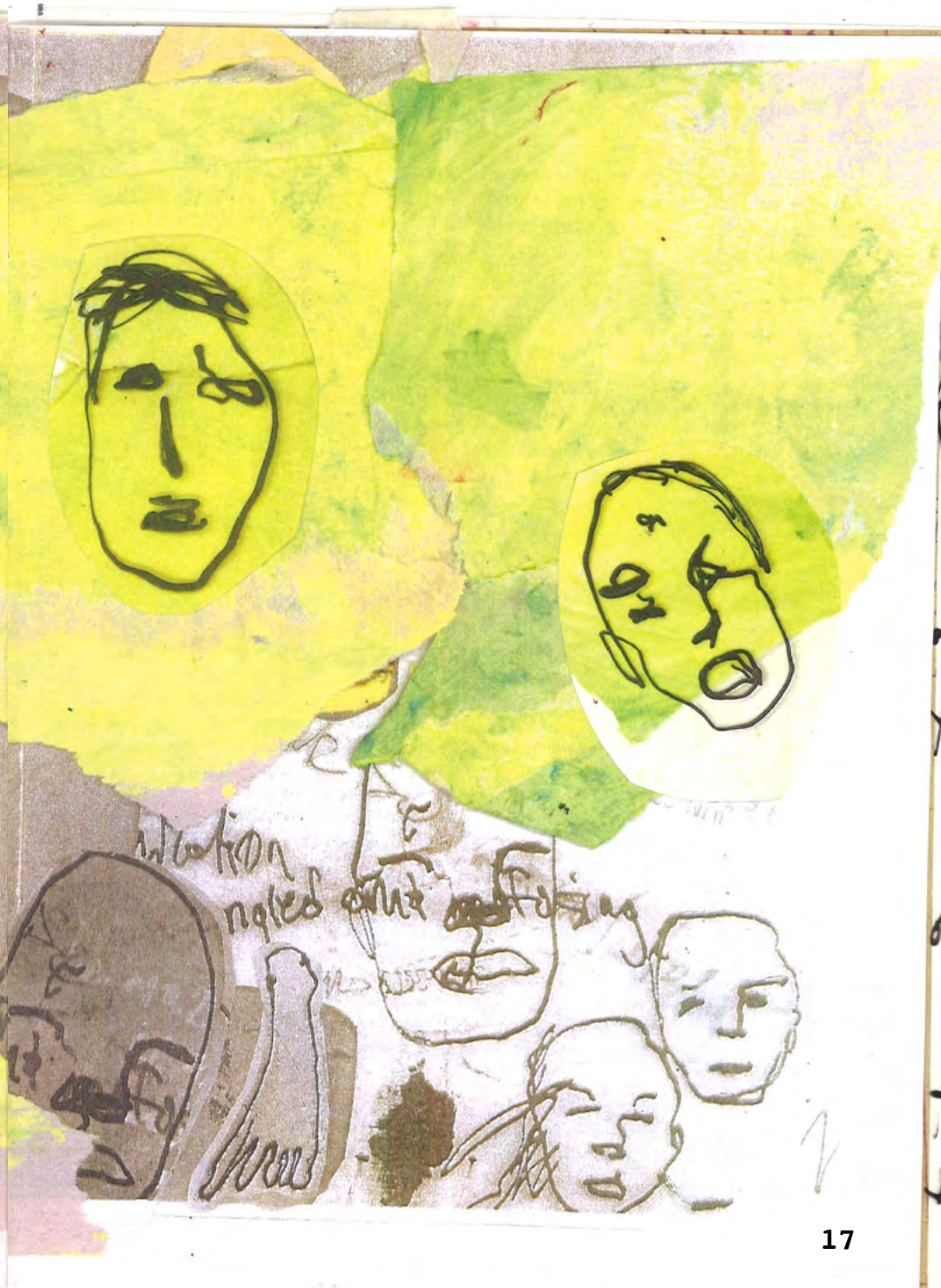
Шкурку с убитой птицы можно снимать или вынимать
внутри после ее добычи прямо в поле, или уже после
того как пройдет трупное окоченение. В этом случае конеч-
ности и шею надо предварительно «размять», т. е. несколько
раз согнуть и разогнуть; после этого они будут свободно
двигаться, не мешая съемке шкурки. Птицу укладывают на
столе головой к левой руке снимающего. Правой рукой раз-
двигают перья посреди брюшка, обнажая кожу. Затем острым
скальпелем или лезвием безопасной бритвы делают неглубокий
разрез (надо стараться прорезать только кожу, не повредив
брюшины) от середины грудиности до анального отверстия
(рис. 73). Разрез точат крахмалом. Затем постепенно,
придерживая птицу на правой руке, вынимают шкурку
или тупой стороной ножа от шеи до хвоста. Как
только палец дойдет до анального отверстия, и вы-
двинуть в разрез тупую сторону ножа. В этот момент
осторожно перерезать брюшину. В этот момент бедро оста-
ется на тушке, а голень снимается шкуркой. Затем
со второй стороны. Когда шкурка снята, освобождают
основание хвоста, подходя к нему с двух сторон. Полу-
ченный промежуток вводят ножницы и обрезают хвост, остав-
ляя на шкурке два-три последних позвонка. Затем птицу став-
вят вертикально на грудь и кожу «чулком» вытаскивают со спины
и груди. Ни в коем случае не следует тянуть за кожу (она легко
рвется!), а нужно осторожно отделять ее от мускулатуры паль-
цами, как бы «сдвигая» в сторону головы. Дойдя до крыльев,
перерезают их в местах сочленения с туловищем и начинают
снимать шкурку с шеи. Обычно снимается она легко. Продол-
жая отделять кожу, освобождают основание черепа (у птиц
с тонкой шеей — уток, дятлов, некоторых куликов — голова не
проходит в отверстие шеи, тогда шею обрезают, шкурку выво-
рачивают перья наружу и череп вынимают через специальное

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- » coeruleus 520
- » cyanus 519
- » lugubris 525
- » major 518
- » montanus 524

- Parus palustris 524
- » rufonuchus 52
- » varius 52
- » amurensis 590
- » domestica 588
- » hispanicus 589
- » montanus 591
- » rutilans 592
- » simplex 593
- Passerculus sandwichensis 558
- Passerella iliaca 558
- Pelecanus crispus 37
- » monocrotalus 39
- Perdix daurica 186
- » perdix 185
- Pericrocotus roseus 448
- Pennisipivorus 123
- » ptilorhynchus 125
- Petrochelidon albifrons 406
- Petronia brachydactyla 58
- » petronia 587
- Phalacrocorax aristotelis 4
- » carbo 40
- » filamentosus 41
- » pelagicus 42
- » pygmaeus 45
- » urile 43
- Phalaropus fulicarius 271
- » lobatus 270
- Phasianus colchicus 49
- Philomachus agrifex 44
- » robor 65
- Phoenicurus phoeniceus 456
- » caeruleocephalus 457
- » erythrogaster 456
- » montanus 455
- » ochrocephalus 454
- » phoeniceus 453
- Phragmaticus aegon 401
- Phylloscopus bonelli 481
- » borealis 474
- » collybitus 471
- » coronatus 477
- » sibilatrix 480
- » tristis 480
- » inornatus 478
- » neglectus 479
- » occipitalis 476
- » proregulus 479

Rubra...
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Run as
fast as
you can

лейная перелетная птица. Кормится в основном на земле, иногда на деревьях. Держится стаями. Гнездо делает обычно в скворечниках и дуплянках, вне поселений — в дуплах и ворах. Кладка из 5—7 голубых яиц в апреле — июне. Крик — резкий, скрипящий. Песня — в основном подражание голосам других птиц.

Сходные виды. От черного дрозда отличается коротким хвостом и ярким металлическим блеском оперения, осенью — пестрой окраской. Молодые отличаются от молодых розовых скворцов темной окраской.

Розовый скворец *Sturnus roseus*

ТАБЛИЦА 47 КАРТА 292

Внешний вид. У взрослой птицы на голове хохол, голова, шея, крылья и хвост черные с металлическим блеском, остальное оперение розовое. Молодые птицы светлые, серовато-бурые, светлее снизу.

Образ жизни. Населяет открытые сухие степи с обрывами, скалами, кучами камней и в культурном ландшафте. Обычная и перелетная



Карта 292. Скворец (1), розовый скворец (2)

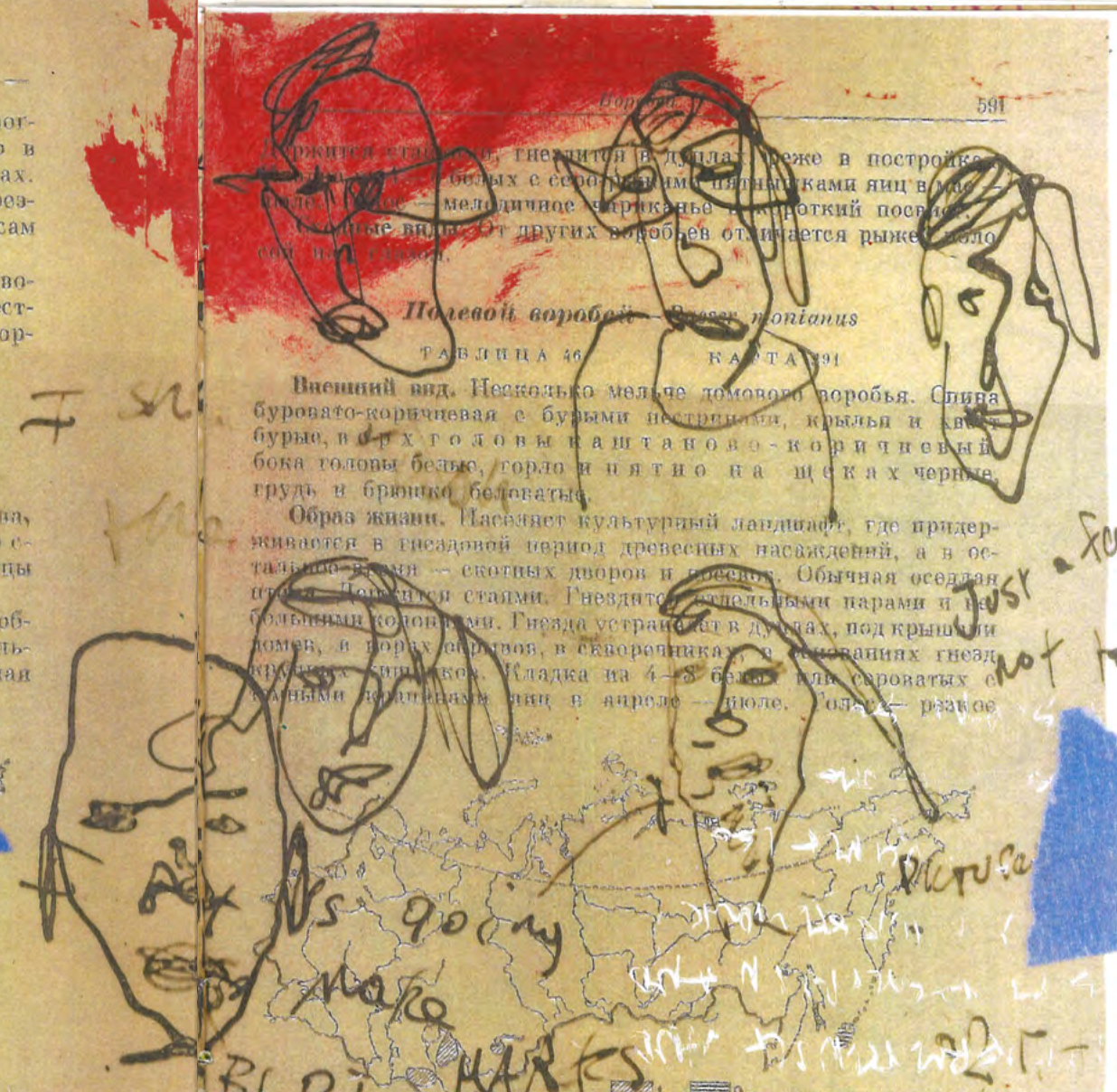
держится стаями, гнездится в дуплах, реже в постройках. Яйца белые с сероватыми пятнышками и в мае. Песня — мелодичное шарканье и короткий посвист. Молодые виды от других воробьев отличается рыже-желтой окраской.

Полевой воробей *Vireo montanus*

ТАБЛИЦА 48 КАРТА 291

Внешний вид. Несколько меньше домового воробья. Спина буровато-коричневая с бурыми пестринами, крылья и хвост бурые, в затылке и на щеках каштаново-коричневый, бока головы белые, горло и пятно на щеках черные, грудь и брюшко беловатые.

Образ жизни. Населяет культурный ландшафт, где придерживается в гнездовой период древесных насаждений, а в остальное время — скотных дворов и поселков. Обычная оседлая птица. Держится стаями. Гнездится в дуплах, в парам и в больших колониях. Гнезда устраивает в дуплах, под крыльями домов, в ворах скворцов, в скворечниках, в скворчатых гнездовых камерах. Кладка из 4—8 белых или сероватых с темными крапинками яиц в апреле — июне. Песня — резкое



Карта 290. Сапсальный воробей (1), Полевой воробей (2)

прикрытием кускивы, выставлено прошито одними листьями. Кладка с конца мая — июле, состоит из 4-8 желтовато-оливковых коричневатых пятнами яиц. При приближении опасности самка задело сидит в гнезда и незаметно отбегает на значительное расстояние. Птица подвижная, быстрая бегущая, но молчаливая птица, гол. при тревоге — короткое «кв-кв», во время брачного пол. — кришное «тррр-трр». Питается комарами и их личинками, мушками и другими беспозвоночными, весной — почками растений.

Схожие виды. От дятла строхоста и бердова песочника отличается рыжей с черными пятнами грудью и черными ногами, зимой — очень светлой окраской. Добытая птица легко опознается по отсутствию заднего пальца.

Исландский песочник — *Calidris canutus*

ТАБЛИЦА 47 КАРТА 301

Внешний вид. Крупный буровато-серый, весь (включая хвост) песочник. Верх хвоста светлый. Ноги зеленоватые. Кладка с конца мая — июле, состоит из 4-8 желтовато-оливковых коричневатых пятнами яиц. При приближении опасности самка задело сидит в гнезда и незаметно отбегает на значительное расстояние. Птица подвижная, быстрая бегущая, но молчаливая птица, гол. при тревоге — короткое «кв-кв», во время брачного пол. — кришное «тррр-трр». Питается комарами и их личинками, мушками и другими беспозвоночными, весной — почками растений.

Образ жизни. Обитатель гористых в негнездовое время встречается по или холмистой тундры, релетная птица. Местами обычен. Голос — «кв-кв». На участках с преобладанием лишайников водится по щебнистым до — неглубокая открытая ямка с выступившей глиной. Кладка во второй половине июня, состоит из 4-8 желтовато-оливковых пятнами яиц. У гнезда очень оливково-зеленая, незаметно, задело до приближения опасности рожен, ухосильно насиженных яйцах, ни птицы, ни энергии. Голос во время брачного полета — короткий свист. Питается комарами и их личинками, мушками и другими беспозвоночными, весной — почками растений.

Схожие виды. От крапивонозика отличается крупными размерами и ярким цветом, зимой от других песочников — крупными размерами и светло-серой окраской.

из 4-8 голубовато-зеленоватых с бурыми пятнами яиц в мае — июне. Голос — звонкое «це-це-це».

Схожие виды. От монгольской сажаульной сойки отличается серым верхом головы и черным пятном на зобе.

Монгольская сажаульная сойка — *Podoces hendersoni*

ТАБЛИЦА 47 КАРТА 301

Внешний вид. Верх головы, крылья и хвост черные. На крыле белая продольная полоса, остальная окраска серо-рыжая, более светлая на нижней стороне тела. Купор и ноги довольно длинные.

Образ жизни. Населяет каменистую и песчаную пустыню с зарослями кустов. Редкая оседлая птица. Держится парами и в одиночку. Хорошо и быстро бегает по земле. Часто кормится в основаниях кустов. Гнездование изучено мало. Одно из найденных гнезд помещалось на земле под кустом без выстилки. Кладка с территории СССР не описана. Голос — довольно резкий свист.



Карта 301. Монгольская сажаульная сойка (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12) (13) (14) (15) (16) (17) (18) (19) (20) (21) (22) (23) (24) (25) (26) (27) (28) (29) (30) (31) (32) (33) (34) (35) (36) (37) (38) (39) (40) (41) (42) (43) (44) (45) (46) (47) (48) (49) (50) (51) (52) (53) (54) (55) (56) (57) (58) (59) (60) (61) (62) (63) (64) (65) (66) (67) (68) (69) (70) (71) (72) (73) (74) (75) (76) (77) (78) (79) (80) (81) (82) (83) (84) (85) (86) (87) (88) (89) (90) (91) (92) (93) (94) (95) (96) (97) (98) (99) (100)

WAKING UP FROM A TRANCE YOU
DON'T KNOW YOU WERE IN A

AMERICAN



tiny little
THOUGHTS



intention
noted



am lib
abandisber
inu s

occupi
niur. l
at vel,
l impre
diniscin



из 4—5 голубовато-зеленоватых с бурыми пятнами яиц в марте — июне. Голос — звонкое «це-це-це».

Сходные виды. От монгольской саксаульной сойки отличается серым верхом головы и черным пятном на зобе.

Монгольская саксаульная сойка — *Podoces hendersoni*

ТАБЛИЦА 47

КАРТА 301

Внешний вид. Верх головы, крылья и хвост черные. На крыле белая продольная полоса, остальная окраска серо-рыжая, более светлая на нижней стороне тела. Клюв и ноги довольно длинные.

Образ жизни. Населяет каменистую и песчаную пустыню с зарослями саксаула. Редкая оседлая птица. Держится парами и в одиночку. Хорошо и быстро бежит по земле. Часто копошится в основаниях кустов. Гнездование изучено мало. Одно из найденных гнезд помещалось на земле под кустом без выщипа. Кладка с территории СССР не описана. Голос — довольно резкий свист.

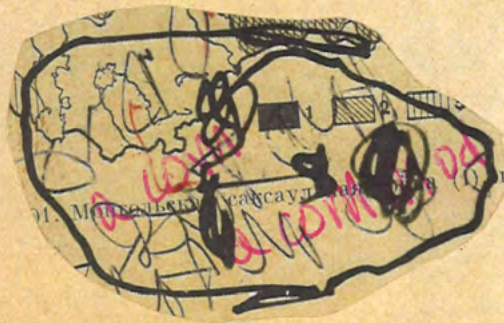
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S R G U E S K M K O W





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Drawing, Rivers

RIVER WALKS

Clyde McGill

RIVER WALKS

Clyde McGill

“There will always be smoke, a satchel
of crumbling verbs, lusted by gods,
devoured by birds as they hit the sky—
their bellies full of India ink”
Patti Smith ‘Auguries of Innocence’ (2005)



1

Can I draw a wave in a plough line in southern somewheres, as a contour in a sentence, a paragraph of pantone colours, or between thaloblue, marsblack, and kimberleyredorange?

I attempt with *Kohl* under my eyes, I draw with a tin bucket of water, of reflect, of curlew calls and sounds of ritual clouds. I wash it over my paper drawing. Only words and locutions. All that is there in the morning, of my landscape, is letters jumbled into monuments of hills that carry the water down infinite flight patterns of whistling kites.

Can I draw transparent flows in broken, evaporating thesauri, elegant glossaries, abundant ventriloquies?

Composition One: Aero

TAKE OFF, a collage of a plane/plain, chalk journey marks
 perhaps, Flight Plan circled, crossed out
 Climbing
 (indecipherable, white grey paint, brush marks, pencil
 geometry, unmeasured, letters spell express)
 pencil chequers, smudged graphite, reread
 High pitch.
 Semi quadrant interventions.

Proposed Lyrics *(there are others, let me know)*

Landscapes, pastorals triaged. Sunrise. Cutaways, cliffs, ridged jump-ups.
 Analysis of agendas, *sud est*.
 Certain residues of a scarp.

Meander. Nidus. Sample.

*Skin turning inside out. Curling at the corners.
 Finger bones extend, flex, retract.*

Listen. Be still. Hot shade.

Mirage. Cracked lips.

Colophon Notes

6 AM. Beleaguered. Should surrender be a way of prosper for the sound of licking the surface of the river. I duck my face closer to this lo/vi hi/saline (as a body in salt water, fecund, nutritious surround ecosmos), as the tide follows the moon, I stick my tongue into this boundary of airsuckers and through to gill dependency, my blood equals their water. Tastes of memory, as a metaphysical, tastes of music, as a posture, tastes of geopolitics, as a skirmish, as an entrapment. Some waves invade my nasals, invoke splutter, I face the other way, toward sunrise, with the flow. He calls out, dogendowsman calls, are you alright, open your eyes, why are you kneeling in the river, are you praying. I submerge, over my ears now, my archaic gill slits flutter under my neckskin. Dogman fades. I drift in sounds of stone and shells clinking, permeates of loss, hums and circles of evolutes, pi, and orbits in oxygenlife.

Composition Two: Score for Eight

Allegro di molto (VIII)

(Metronome falls off the balance at 600 rpm, pieces writhe on my studio floor, twitching, looking up at me, cyborg to cyborg)

Red crayon.

excess black charcoal (compressed)

ri tar SLOW

very swift

Proposed Lyrics (*Thinking of Dante's Inferno*)

Red, blue, mauve, lime, sunburst on the colour chart.

Light.

Do you know how to mix primaries?

Are we the intended he asked her, are we available on Tuesday after two?

Red red, Christmas light. Red, god. A colore swept over me, glow glow, going to orange, add yellow slow, god. All the portals reflect in my eyes.

Gardengod, protect our worms, protect our fish, provide for our cacti. Make the morning redredred, some orange.

Christmasgod.

Previously,

Illustrati.

(fortyfourse), ok? I draw my body three times, a diminishment. A nutritive. Pouring out of my soul. My life is a canticle. I draw my life and afterlife. Four sketches, one future, pasts multiple.

I construct the play, the performance, the paradise.

Magenta. Ruby. Marble casts.

(demon fiend devil beast, Lucifer Diablo he sings, holding his Grandmother's platter over his head, two hands to go, sing the ghosts away,

Granny calls from

the pantry, dry goods. Higher, hold Lucifer to Diablo, CMYK RED.

Demondevilbeastluciferdiablo, go now go go)

(Aside, piano) Firstly, I don't have a god straight up. I had them over the years, one broke my pencil in primary school, one broke my heart in swim class, another absconded with my hat, a transparent trio made me laugh, their trinity concoction, a jalopy of jokes. Perhaps there is a spirit.

Firstly, deitydemon, a demigod, will that do?

(Gardengod

Cutyourfingergod

Lookattheviewgod

Aftertwo god)

Colophon Notes

Apocalypse

Cataclysm

Prophecy

Notes of disaster at endofworlds / tasting notes / I recoil / I spit this river water out through my nose / my spinosaurus senses

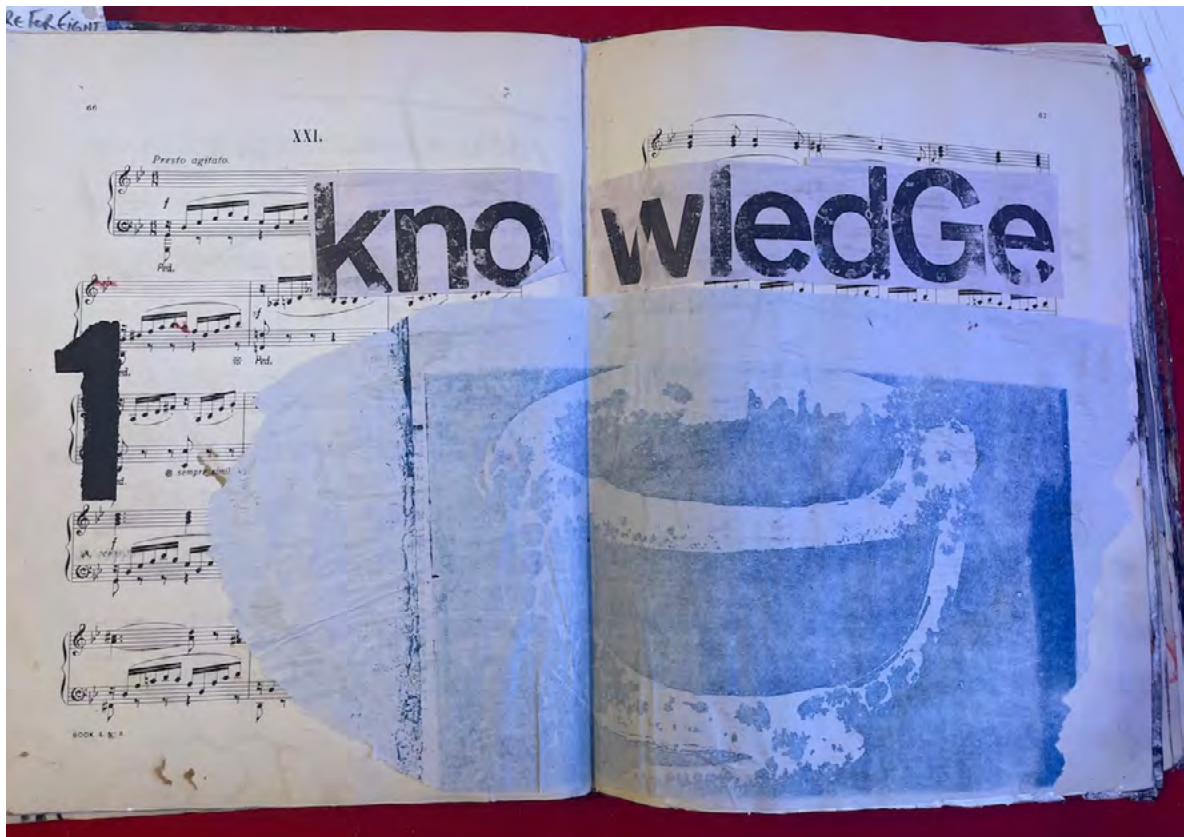
Predator

border of extinction / this revelation / a staycation

(hemivolutes cycle through my ears, out my heart, into my chest cavity. He says I have bad news bad news bad news badnewsbadnews whatwhatwhat

planetarydemisal you are complicit
 complicitcomplicit it's not complicated
 it's not complicated it's not) In Composition Ten, covered, hidden, smudged.

Hands. Cupped hands collect. Collate. Context sounds. Feel this murmur rise to screaming as a jetplane careers along this flooded creek. Darkness. Diadem of charcoal pieces, torn leaves and violence threatens to tilt further into oblivion as I swim blind across at the bendsweep, hunting, feeling reaching out through the noise, the muddy water, the selfloss, mourning early my deaddrown, headlong into branches of roar, an argonaut, a me, scrambles, holds the current, escape the klaxon, pulls up and over, bellies the treeoverhang, my feet desperate. The waterchoir tuning, turning, running up the scales.



2

Composition Seven: knowledGe 1 (plus 2,3,4,5)

And a bowl, etched onto butcher's paper torn edges, collaged over someone's presto agitato. (she says fast and angry, they say very quick and with excitement)

A large stencilled **1**

left of page.

1 knowledGe

worn letterpress, beautiful, scrumptious
scattered fragments of ink, some absent.

/begging bowl/

On Obsession Malcolm Knox (2008), page 12: writes of reading his maternal grandfather's diary (squiggles without meaning) after the G died and concludes it wasn't about interrogating the diary, rather the diary asked questions of him.

Proposed Lyrics (see recents)

(ii) a bowl contains ocean water, macerated to absorption,
extinct
Living components accompanied by
salts of metals, wither.

She tapes a further photograph of her family archives to the raft

Six drawings of wing structures in charcoal fossils, include angel
and Deirdre remnants.

Flight is constant. Uplift remains dependent.
Figure four continues, showing spiritual uncertainties, abandons,
reneges.

Testifiers. Scarifiers extended.
Sound recorded by her from tree stump surfaces, using shroud methods.

Birds call from a billion days away.
Hot morning, session begins, red yellow sunup.

(iii) Dust cloud images falter. Electronic notes revert to code.
Zero. Self.

2 and salt content of blood,
release, its almost fe...

(photo of
river.

Caution: Submerged Rocks)

3 BRAIN ETCHING
(on glassine)



3

4 Two rounds of paint over
each other
(circular route Wednesday)
orange chalk cursive

5 red ink plant (F)
sample (unknown)

Colophon notes

Bodies of text lie
Testament (h) provides evidence of erosion of fact.

Points shake totter, collude,
opinions as onions as
layered fictions.

*Restitute in the afternoon he says one sugar one biscuit
Madness, deck walkers, and obsessions of taste,*

*two double baked positions potions portents (very hot, forty six degrees)
Essential remedies each noon
except Sundays when whisky
is required on crying day*

Conclude. This is truth. Hands up.
context of correct.
Inquiries keep coming.

This aitchwooh
is destined for the
Southern Ocean
as it rises, rises

I am interested in drawing words. Drawing the shapes around my mouth
so they become sounds, on my head so resonances escalate on my giri and sulci,
outside surface of my brain, cortex along my fingers, as a material as an ocean as a
border of ridges holding sight and imagination /rugae/anatomy of sound/ words.

I spit the shards of charcoal, splintered shatter, onto the page, into a memory of
foxed mulberry paper onto linen from jute fields of political globalgoes.

*(Patent ductus lets unoxygenated letters slide over the dam in my heart, enter the
paint mix jar, like upstream salmon, wild, quick, jump jump jumping. Words keep
appearing in my drawings, on my print plates, embedded in copper, cascade from
this ink sky, forms a raft, a pontoon, a river crossing (waist deep at the island). Letter
litter on the far sand bank.)*

Remember remember the flavor of these macarons, a mixed box, a selection
of a palette from Monet and Basquiat. An empty memory. And no spelling. Any
way. They keep asking. So I dance the flavor, step, step, writhe, contort, a certain
calligraphy (font dramaturg), lime emotives, tastes of joy, dance, dance, arms out,
choreography by patisserie, copperplate consumes *in flagrante delicto*. Walking on
my hands balancing sweet serifs.

• • • • •

(knowledge series ends) thank you.

• • • • •

Composition Nine Title: B(i)
B(ii)
B(iii)
B (hum)

(These inquiries are for W G Sebald's complex visual imagination, not mine
not even, not me, my studio has a large painting on the walls now, plural because
the painting is nine metres long and two point two metres high, more than me plus
milk crate, oil on linen, again, I can't answer this. WG came for coffee and a walk
in the garden (sunflowers mostly, tomatoes possibly, sleepy lizard (blue tongue)
definitely). WG said where are the questions.) (In the collaboration between W

G Sebald and painter, Jan Peter Tripp, *Unrecounted*, (2004), writing by WG and etchings by J P Tripp, “ their declared aim was that text and image should not explain, let alone illustrate each other but enter into a dialogue that would leave each his own space for reverberations.”)

(The two, at least two, of me, colluding here, agree.)

Text to follow,
(per kind favore of spectre, apparition, Doppelgänger)

whisper whisper whisper

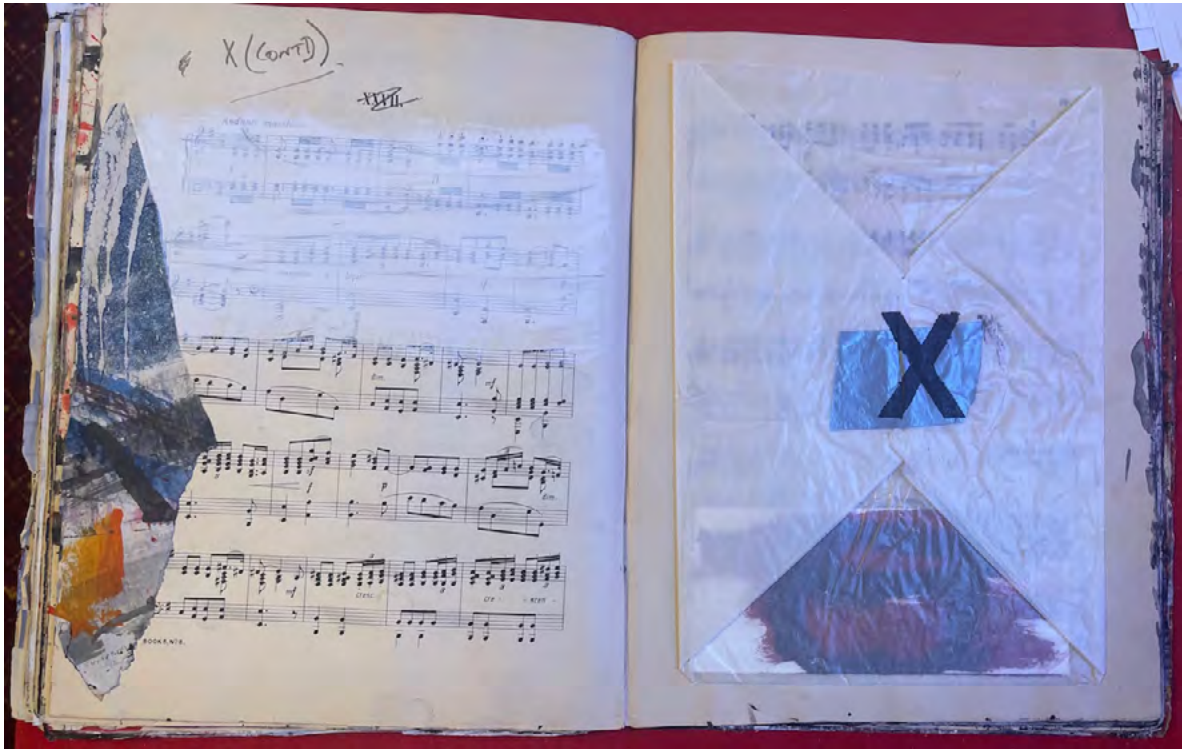
Words rumble around my feet as I walk this morning, being looked at, an experience of this river that is not contained, There are banks, edges, cliffs, and there is an everywhere about riverriver. A spread of flow, an alphabetical, exudes from the desert. Soft and understood wafts into my living. Calls and sings and levitates wherever I am, in Kyoto with kingfishers, in the Larapinta or Finke River, hundreds of millions of years old and its flocks of swooping budgerigars, or sitting in my studio garden.

Proposed Lyrics (cont'd):

I collect intervals.
Uranium reducts in a determined journey, onwardandonward,
punctuated by spills of trons plus creative. Decay isotopes.
Lead melts at three hundred thirty to mercury (-32C)
he writes in chalk {A Canticle for Leibowitz, Walter M Miller}
he wipes paint on his pants, time again and time,
uranium to lead to mercury (asks have I got that right)
(bubbles, oozes up from drawing to plate to paper)
Shame as a karma carried over generational rivers, (sine cosine)
shadows on bombmakers, warmongers
(walk on the Montebellos
he said,
sand to glass to war)
(testing testing)
(words mutate from the plate)
Climatechange (earth melts at each end, water can't extinguish the flames)
mercury goes up up up
we, meltmakers
sup, sup.

Remove. Realign. Ligne verte.

(Sentient.
Orpheus plays his lyre as Apollo taught
up down across the corrugations on any water tank
after rain
no rattling no elation ineluctable sounds,
notes trapped in water, in Hades,
as Eurydice swims inside)



6

Composition Ten: X

X X X X X X X

First page:

An X seals the packet of sounds on the page.
Inside the packet is a painting on a card.

Second page:

Tuesday 4 PM
(Leipzig, 1843)

Third page

Past & present (t upside down), letterpress,
grey paint surrounds, brush marks, freehand.

Fifth page

Apocalypse, atom bomb blast, ink.

[Fourth page missing.]

Unwriting

Unwilling

Renarrate

Prophase



6

Gesticulowordage
Ventriloquy fiction (untruths)
Permaponder

Proposed Lyrics (yes or no, if you wish)

*(Is it a question, a seeking to posing an hypothesis, asking quietly
what is there
to know.*

*Is the palimpsest an overlay of meaning
or a drawing on a drawing, in fact, repeat acts of drawing a portal
to knowledge?*

*Can we abstract walking
(amongst some dictionary pieces)
say, to asemic strolling,
that has no purpose,
except*

*an aesthetic form
an event of pleasure that ignores the questions of where did you go, why are you
doing this, what role does this aimless perambulation play?*

Colophon Notes

Dioxin. Feel phosphates on your palate. He shakes his fists. Water torments (sic) from his mouth. Dioxin. Again. Kill. This. And more. Rivers. Water fires out from his ears. As sure as DDT killed the bald eagles (we watch them on the north of the Mississippi River, overwintering, barricades and levees stop ice forming, catching the fish, breeding places). [Eggs are strong shelled again, sea eagles at the mouth of the Gascoyne, white feathers on their chests.]

Phosphates destruct. Water sprays out of his eyes. Again. Carbon emissions drown this valley as the river dissolves into the sea. Salt water invades our vegie gardens. As the icebergs dissolve into the sea. Carbon destroys the cold. See this formula he calls from below the water level. FORMULA. Eff is for formula, true>true. Truth is the terrorist, he sings in *a minor*. Truth. Glaciers flow rate equals gravity plus carbon emissions. QED. Formula. Truth qed. A driftwood stick in his right hand, he writes in the sand, glacier flow equals (queue) gravity plus carbon emissions. TRUTH. (GLACIAL). (Understanding of this, he calls as he struts up and down, is Glacial Slow) Water surges up to his throat. I am Alethia. Not Dolos. Not Apate. Disclosure plus truth, again a formula (thank you M Heidegger he scrawls in the waves). Hands above his head. Above his head. He gargles again in *a minor*. River. River.



(Excuse. Recluse. The obtuse resides in this river, further out. I swim sidestroke through an incoming eddy, out, round, fraught. Chops to gravity, blocks of sanity (insanity), rare in the quotidian (overseer redux, word of modernism). Eff is force, arr distance between the bodies, Mine dolphin kicking to be overcome by current, and metaphysical me. Mass, a sung mass in ascension, latinesque, along Dolorosa. I roll over onto my back, look into your eyes, into Universe Three. Gravity impounds the river water. Gravititas floats me forward. Through a breach in the surface, feel the furnace.)

An Aside

(ASEMIC: a vacuum of meaning... Wikipedia)

The news is worse today, cases are rising, some in this country. Politicians begin to speak on doom tableaux. At first I am touched emotionally, again and again. Its all around, all these voices saying get ready, be prepared, the plague ariseth, this will change everything, life is teetering.

So, as a print maker I have to respond, much of my work is made about current situations, about political interventions or betrayals or undoings. I usually etch, though as labs, print rooms and presses begin to shut down, as students are sent home, I have to think of another way. I give up on steel for my plates, I buy a roll of polycarbonate, and find whatever mechanical devices that will mark this dense material.

I can't think how I can represent a speech graphically, how it looks as marks on paper (apart from text). I also notice as time goes on and the pandemic broadens and deepens, a feeling of anger begins to emerge in me. Where is the political leadership, where is the action? All there seems to be is more and more, longer and longer speeches. These men, and they are mostly men, are out of touch.

So my plates increase in number, all unmarked yet, I feel paralysed in the face of this. Finally, I am forced by my inadequacies, to act. I lay a plate on the ground, interesting because unlike steel, it is transparent. I can see some ants crawling under it. I plug in my angle grinder, I begin the largest dry point I have ever even thought of, and I add plates, it gets longer, the speech grows. I am in touch with reality, I am in touch with the sky, what an exhilaration.

I rub my fingers over the marks, the cuts, the vibratorio, the skid offs, the burn throughs. I have arrived at a place of touch, of feeling, of fabricating a voice, albeit in asemic writing.

Printing requires self, the presence of self, in touch with the physical, the music, the emotional, an apron, maybe not, and a body for the said self to cavort about, hands and eyes. In the self the body, in the body the senses. So, I begin to print this as an eleven metre long single piece, that seems to be a speech length of denial, or explanation. Five plates. A bit wider than a metre. The print room is empty for weeks, what a silver lining. I ink, I roll the wheel, the press moves. Two days to dry that bit, begin again, thread the paper through the press, get it straight, rethread it, ink the plates, roll the press, and again, again, again. Red ink, black ink, red ink, black ink. Nuances of speech. I can hear steps leading to the lectern. I can smell the burn on some of these plates. I think of my friend saying *Ars longa, vita brevis*, will this ever end, skills take time, life is short. He also told me that Desmond Tutu said that to do nothing means you agree with the oppressor. Shapes of words, word look alike, emerge.

Composition Eleven: Call & Relent

There is obliquity, there is imperfection, there are constant ornithologisms in this morning. Graffiti and white faced heron, quiet. Inconsolable. Reflections disrupt the depth, falsify the surface. Prometheus lives and dies in shimmering red horizons, no rain. Early, earlier, earth birds created certainty, as night spluttered.

Writing on cellophane with marker pen (permanent), floats semisubmerged in postrain tannin stain, jiggling letters.

He practices his yoga. Turns the water inside out. Masquerades across, holds the sound in his teeth.

Crystalline sky in blue glaze that begins on the Bosphorus, on to Izmir Gediz River Azul, caiques holding down his Aegean Sea.

RELENT More humane, Soften, Less harsh, Extra flowers, Better desserts

Character List:

As in order of appearance list

Situations, places, geography list

(The geometry list: eg pelicans are triangular, or at least

an agglomeration of

triangles, open beak, feet, wings (folded, extended, out when swimming), flying South)

I have these lists compiled now, juggle them as I walk in the wild wind, bearing fruit in August. My flora list hangs on my wrist by a blackened silver chain from camp fire three near Mick's. Kookaburras. Grain trucks, pink and grey galahs, many parrots, endangered list at the back. Noise from that wild wind, ghostly, awry, he says. Voice harvested from his mouth, jumblewords, plicated paragraphs. Circumreality.

CALL A summons, Bird/Animal cry, Distress

(We begin from the bridge in Heidelberg, we speak German, listen to a robin, some distress in her call, recovers. Water follows us as the kreislauf. Umlaut escorts the robin)

Proposed Lyrics:

Surrender to absurdity

Death lurks nearby

for free.

(photograph to follow on archaic texts, asemic writing.

(sans serif defines life

this afternoon

retracted by all detail

goaded into nothing and no frivolous

paucity

no exception

*to scorn for decoratively,
for horror, for small font
feet walking through
a sheet of text)*

I watch them go by early
each morning
yes, yes,
similar words
the same melody, harmonicas, a fractured drum,
singing singing singing
singing.

*Mesmerised by fish
requesting the cormorants to
dive and miss
resting on the jetty.*

Colophon Notes

One:

Seven ducklings follow an infinite being, more a spiritual calling than a guru, and a mother. They crawl up onto her back, tremble their boat into motion, she clucks her precious cargo off to sleep.

Two:

I drink this tide upstream, it tastes of blood, umami, seaweed, your hand, his Kyoto dashi.

Three:

His present is a small thin split page book of poetry, old, pages glued to paper backing, sacrificial words. I read him one piece, words of comfort, we are here, it can be lonely.

Four:

I raise my left foot, a mechanics of perambulation descriptor, move my knee, swing the arc of calcaneus down, up, bend, straighten, sole horizon achieved, contact, load forward, raise my eyes, repeat, return. A lifetime of discard, plot counter, go stop.

Five:

Is this the path to redemption, inferno, paradise, divine. Dante's walk through purgatorio. Ulysses staggers home. Milton says he is lost. A river, a dream, ghosts ride this boat, flood waters rush about in predawn light, Strange occluded island, lean forward, keep the bow down. Eagles overhead, searching for Prometheus.



All your words tumble down to me. Absolution. Interpretation. Pretend.

I gather them into my mesh bag, I remain underwater. Rehearsal. Fantasm. They wriggle, they fold, they go on. I stay in the afternoon shadows. Deep. All words. Laugh. There's pressure on my ears. I listen to the fossils. Fish choirs. Songs in minor keys.

List of works

- 1 Clyde McGill. *River Walks: an Artist's Book* (2022). Drawings, text, print, collage on found music book. 27w x 34h x 3d cm.
- 2 Clyde McGill. Detail, *River Walks. Composition Seven, 1*. Letterpress, stencil, etching, collage.
- 3 Clyde McGill. Detail, *River Walks. Composition Seven, 4*. Acrylic, stencil on paper.
- 4 Clyde McGill. Detail, *River Walks. Composition Ten*. Collage, acrylic, stencil, enclosure of photograph in glassine envelope, tape.
- 5 Clyde McGill, Detail, *River Walks*. Letterpress, acrylic.
- 6 Clyde McGill, *The Speech*. (2021) Drypoint etching and monoprint on 300gsm BFK paper. 11 x 1.2m.

Contextual statement

I always did silent performance, amongst the mess of my visual art practice. Quietly, persistently, over years, words crept in. Not directional, not didactic, not even contextual. Mostly, single groups of letters, ornamental perhaps, aesthetic sometimes. As they arrived, the words carried baggage, variable meanings, use-by contentions and qualifiers. They showed up in my etchings, took charge of my pencil (*borrowed* they said), self-portrayed themselves into my drawings and scratched their names across my videos. Everywhere I looked. They appeared and stayed and stayed and grew and grew. Making more sense, making lines of meaning, spaces of loss, sinking down to nothing. Rising aloft in the front, egoistic, turned away. Inquiring, pronouncing, disappearing.

My drawings and prints produce words that talk to each other, and to me if I listen. This expanded artist book occurred to me as an adventure. Art is an adventure. Giorgio Agamben, philosopher, writes that adventure is an encounter with both the world and yourself, and that adventure and speech, life and language merge.

And I write, using words, or at least the marks that words make, traces of letters, or a language in code, not a drawing, more symbols or graphic descriptions of talking. Laura Freeman, reviewing Max Porter's book on Francis Bacon, recalls Porter's statement that he attempts 'to write *as* painting, not about it' (2021). A perfect description for an artist book, *as* art, not about art.

The artist book I am writing about here is titled *River Walks: Sound compositions / graphic scores*. It is a collection of sixteen graphic compositions in a found music book. There is an accompanying book, performing an extended colophon that includes notes to the walks, ephemera, lunch wrappers, photographs, other text, explanations of points of *continue* and

give up. It also holds some poetry that I have written during the project that may be suitable as lyrics for the compositions. I kept them in my notes as I walked and thought of the soundwork I will compose for each walk. Also, there are other words, letters, phrases in disrepair, taut, perfect, sequenced, (*sequinssequinsd*), that could be used, spare words that just turn up during the walks.

These words are descriptors, they are journeyfriends. Each part of the two works spoken of in this discourse assumes a place:

of geography
of imagination
of inner life
of aesthetics (*a broken promise*).

The parallel between paradox and poetics of text and art in this part of my practice is surveyed and inspected **here**. I write of drawing marks that become text, words that metamorphose into diagrams, into depictions to translate likeness (and sometimes not), to imaginings, back into thought by others, and on and on, until charcoal, chalk or crayon expire.

There may be contributions by former works:

The Speech (2021): A rolled print, ten metres by one point two metres, drypoint on 300 gsm BFK paper and the *Notes to the Speech*, a scroll on paper. Asemic writing.

Dolorosa (2019): An installation of paintings and a sound apparatus for performance of a narrative by audience and me, telling the story of an asylum seeker's voyage, searching for a new home. Text integrated into paintings, spoken words and charcoal handwriting on gallery walls.

Rivers Walked

Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) at Walyalup (Fremantle, WA).(Noongar people)

River Ness (*Abhainn Nis*), Scotland. (Gaelic)

The confluence of the Rhone and Saone rivers, Lyon, France

Mississippi river, mainly at St Louis and New Orleans, USA. (*Misi-ziibi*, Anishinaabe people)

Kamo river, Kyoto, Japan

Works Cited

Agamben, G 2018 *The Adventure*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Freeman, L 2021 'Paint in the bloodstream: *The Death of Francis Bacon*, by Max Porter', reviewed in *The Spectator Australia*, 9 January 2021 <https://www.spectator.com.au/2021/01/raw-bacon/> (accessed 13 June 2023).

Knox, M 2008 *On Obsession*. Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Publishing.

Miller, WM 1959 *A Canticle for Liebowitz*, New York: JB Lippincott.

Smith, P 2005 'Auguries of Innocence – Poems', New York: HarperCollins.

Sebald, WG and JP Tripp 2005 'Unrecounted', London UK: Penguin.

About the author

Clyde McGill is a visual artist and writer who makes art and researches in nations, borders, colonialism, politics and social issues. His methodologies include print, drawing, painting, and performance, amongst others. He has a particular interest in artist books. Clyde has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship, and was a Visiting Scholar at Parsons Fine Art, NYC for a year (2009/2010). He has a PhD in Fine Art (RMIT). His art work is collected in many places including the NGA, AGSA, and AGWA.

I acknowledge with gratitude that much of this project occurred on Noongar land and water. This is unceded land, cared for physically and spiritually by past and present custodians and owners. I appreciate working and living here.

404: THE PAGE YOU HAVE ENTERED DOES NOT EXIST

Caren Florance

University of Canberra, ORCID: 0000-0003-0988-9996



Downloadable publication instructions

There is a separate file for this author which has the imposed pages for a 2-up 16pp booklet.

Print the pages of this file back to back on A4 (or A3) paper using a printer or photocopier. The file is Landscape orientation, and should flip at the short edge. Once printed, fold the bundle in half, short ends together, and press the spine with something firm (handle of a dinner knife, or back of a wooden spoon) to form an A5 (or A4) booklet. Bind by stapling, tying or sewing if desired.

404: THE PAGE YOU HAVE ENTERED DOES NOT EXIST

Caren Florance

As an Australian artist book researcher, I have spent a lot of time trying to find many of the historical sources for our community conversations, image repositories, and gallery & award event webpages, and was confronted by a wave of 404 pages. I learned the pungent term *link rot*, where links change content or move to a new online location, and the more poetic *content drift*, which describes the slow constant modification of websites. I also discovered how many holes there are in the Wayback Machine if your short exhibition only existed between crawling dates. The rise of artist books in Australia coincided with a period when books about the local field weren't published because it was assumed that all the relevant information would be forever on the internet. This is the case for most scholarly disciplines, so there's a sinking sense of working hard downwards into a black hole. I wrote a paper about this, published in *The Blue Notebook* (2021), but it struck me recently that all the screengrabs I took for it would make a great zine. I recently inherited a box of coloured dry-rub Letratone from a friend who was a graphic designer in the pre-computer era. They seemed to enjoy playing with the leftover shards of colour and I love them too, so I'm scanning them for new purposes. I think they perfectly illustrate the sense of digital ruin that we're constantly encountering.

Works Cited

Florance, C. 2021 'Augmented Materiality, Lost Reality', *The Blue Notebook* 15.2, 22–31.

About the artist

Caren Florance is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the University of Canberra (UC) Centre for Creative and Cultural Research. She was a technical officer for the ANU Edition + Artist Book Studio, and taught Book Arts and Letterpress in the ANU Printmedia & Drawing Workshop for almost two decades. She also taught Typography for UC Visual Communications. Her practice-led UC doctorate explored the overlaps of visual poetry, text art and artist books through material collaboration with poets and artists. She is active in the Australian artist book community, and has won a Fremantle Print Award and the Northern Beaches Libraries Artist Book award, and has been shortlisted for the Libris Award and the 66th Blake Prize. She has been collected by national and international collections, mostly libraries, including the British Library and the National Library of Australia. She is an international peer reviewer for the UK journal *The Blue Notebook* (University of the West of England). In 2019 Cordite Books commissioned and published her visual poetry volume *Lost in Case*, which was shortlisted for the ASAL Mary Gilmore Award. She lives in Bega NSW, deep in the Yuin Nation.

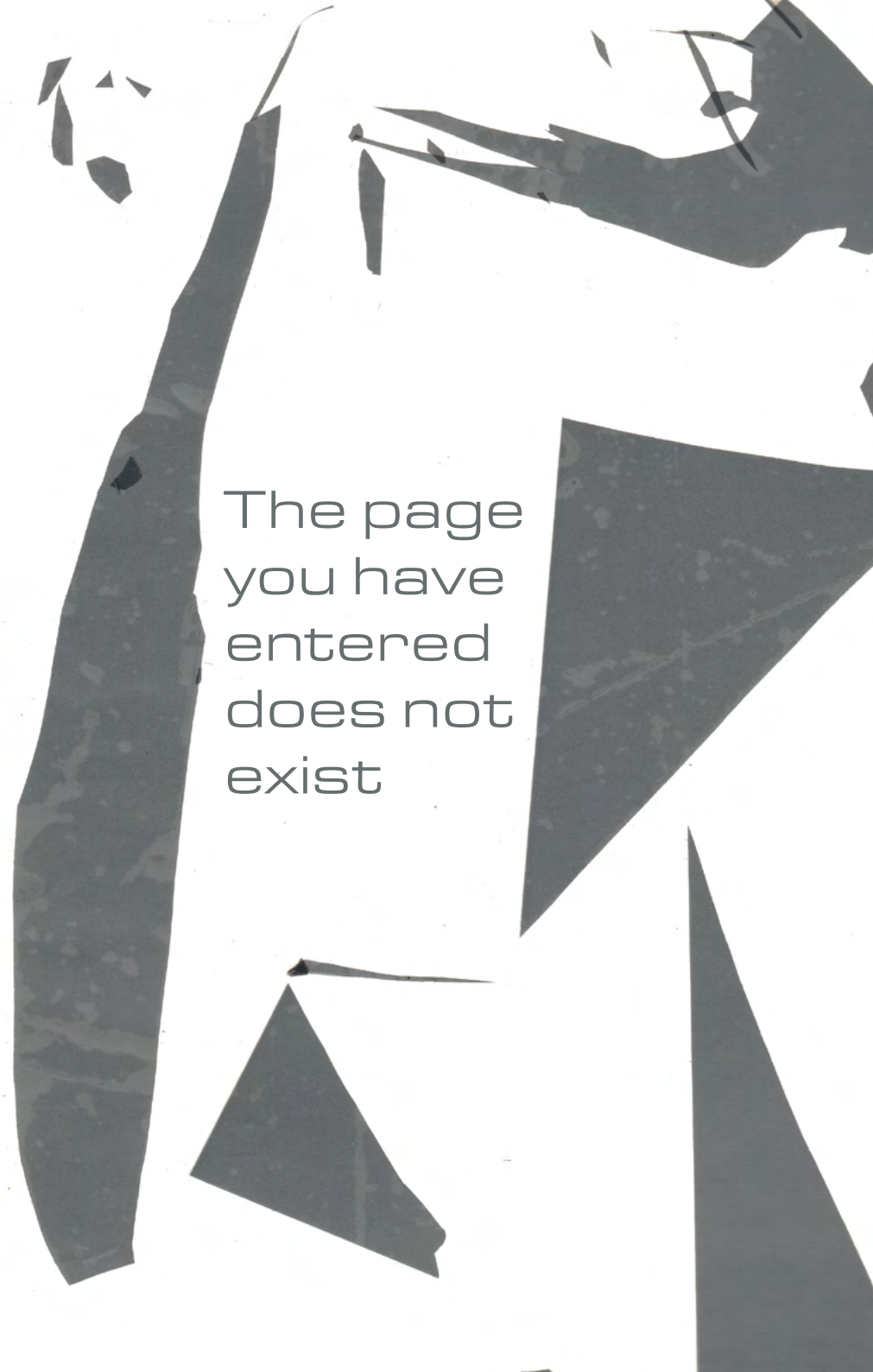
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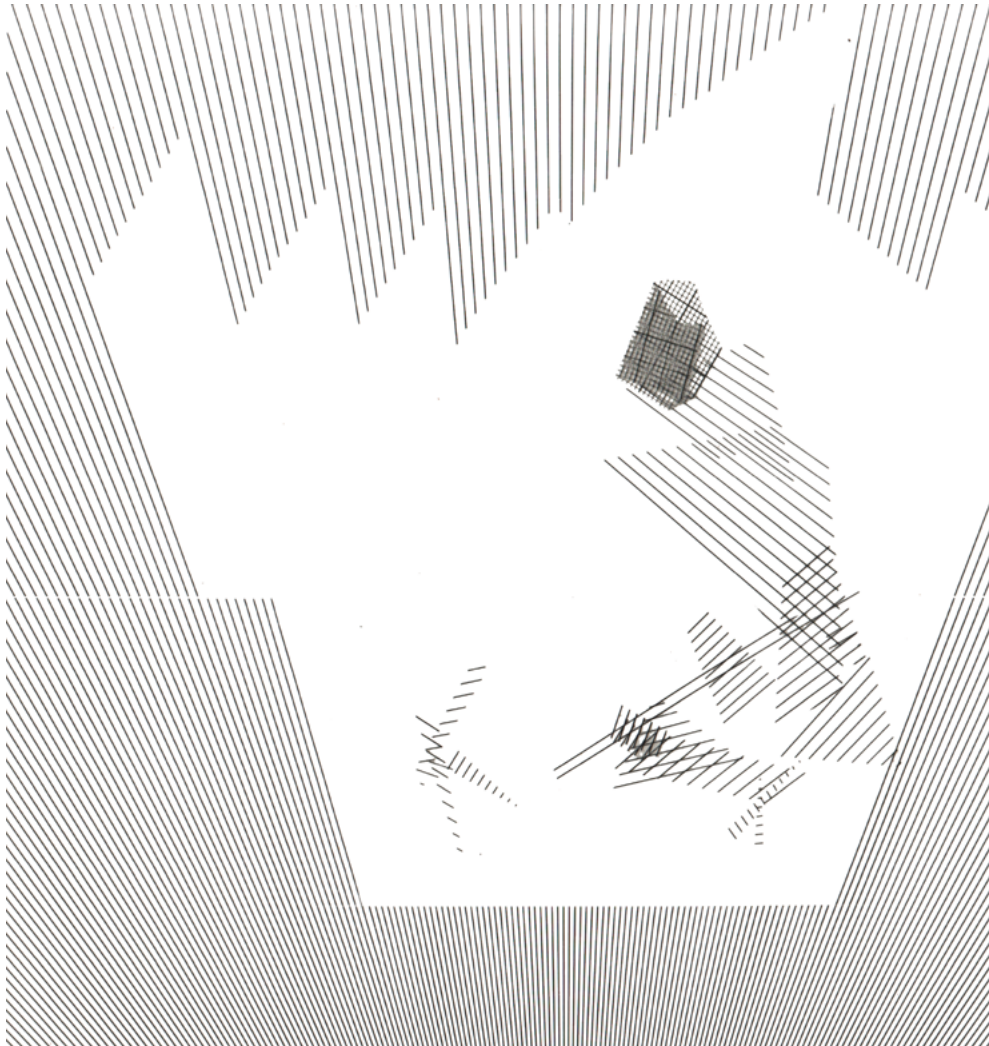


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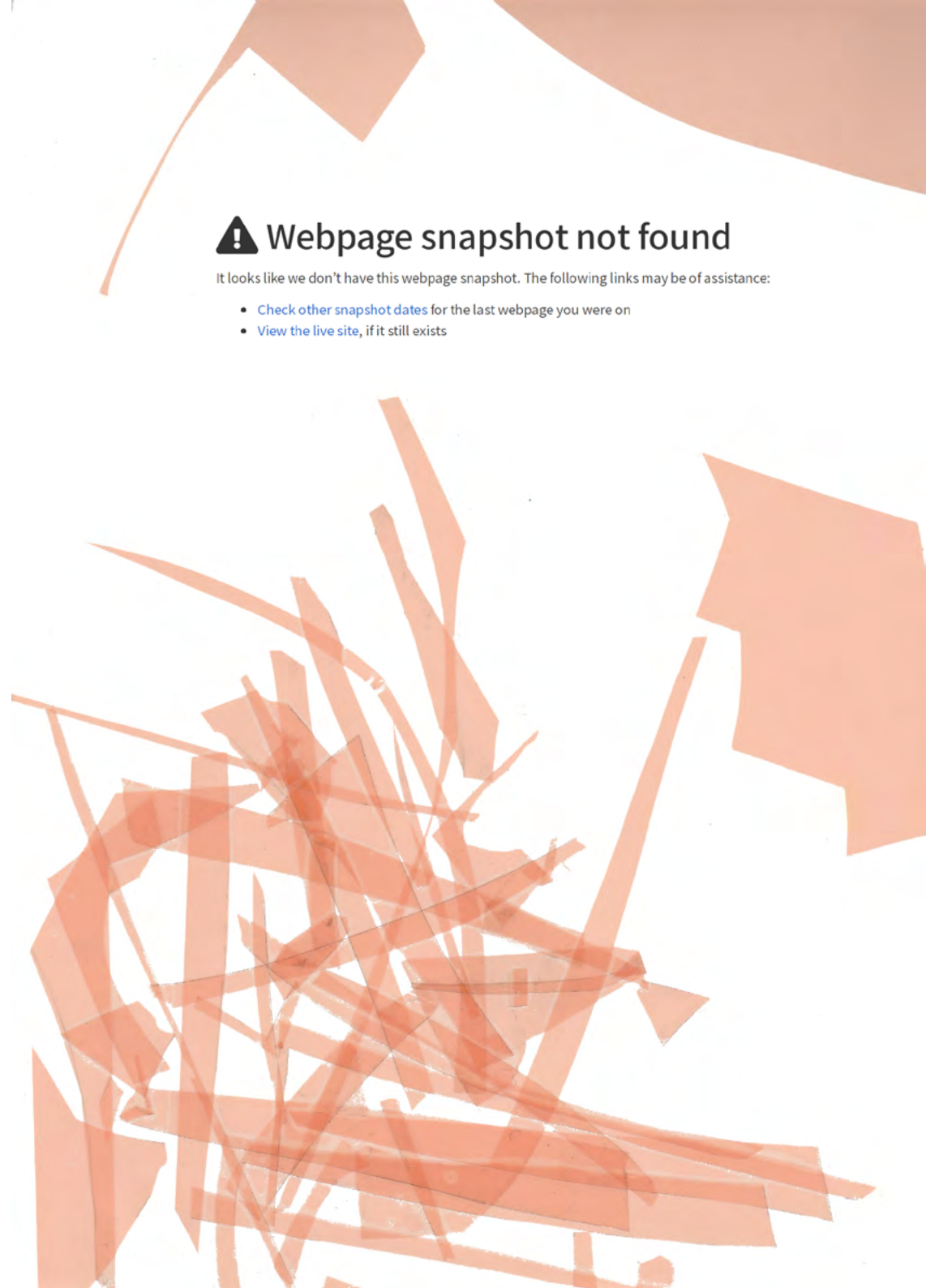
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- Images, Maps & Artefacts
- Research & Reports
- Books & Libraries
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Websites

"Noosa Books.03" 2003

WEBSITES

No results

Hey now, hey now...don't dream it's over.



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Home > Sorry, we can't find the content you're looking for

Sorry, we can't find the content you're looking for

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`11:38:34 March 21, 2020`

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PREVARICATION

Or, the general drift of the 2020s

Marian Crawford

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Abstract

Taking individual and self-contained production of hand printed books as a case study, this paper explores if a close reading of an art object – an artist book – and the solitary work and practice of a studio artist could be a model for less jangly relations with a turbulent world. The role of artist agency is discussed via a close examination of the decision-making process of creative visual art production, drawing on the works of Agnes Martin as exemplar.

PREVARICATION, OR THE GENERAL DRIFT OF THE 2020s

Marian Crawford

As the long Melbourne lockdowns trundled on and as Donald Trump's presidency jaunted my view of politics beyond our shores, I imagined another contest of powers: the hand-printed artwork versus the newspaper headline (digital and on paper); the everyday and the local versus unsteadiness-inducing global shenanigans.

How could a humble and everyday material be transformed into an expanse, a field of pattern, an array of dots and lines? In a hand-printed image? Could making an artwork suggest a way to navigate the 2020s, these last three years, and perhaps support a re-alignment of my barricaded sensibilities as an artist and as a citizen of the world? Could I turn from defence to embrace? And if that artwork were a book, would that work bring pleasure? For surely, it was a bit of cheering up that was needed.

After all, Nicolas Bourriaud has given us his 'accurate' definition of Art 'as an activity consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, action and objects.' (Bourriaud 107) Taking this definition to heart while narrowing its application to the book as 'object', I wanted to test whether the production of these printed art works might create, for me, a new (or at least different) relationship with the world.

Georges Didi-Huberman, discussing the works of art historian Aby Warburg, describes the form of the book as one that makes 'new relations appear inexhaustibly ... between things or words that nothing seemed to have brought together before.' (Didi-Huberman 2018 6). Didi-Huberman is here describing an Atlas, but if I extended this description to the production of an artist book – a hand-printed, low-tech, small edition produced in the tradition of the fine art print – perhaps I too could arrive at that set of 'new relations'.

I began production, with cardboard and glue, found fabrics, letterpress type, a small etching press, a hobby letterpress printing press (an Adana), ink and paper. I worked from a small studio that overlooks a garden. It was quiet, and I worked in silence.



¹ Marian Crawford *WAVERING* 2022. Artist book, printed in an edition of 8, relief prints & letterpress, 15 X 21 X 0.4cm. *Photography: Tim Gresham.*

The images that spread across the pages of *WAVERING* are printed from found textiles – bags that hold citrus fruit, milliner’s mesh. When printed, these textiles record unravelling grids (1–3). The unsteadiness of these images offers a sense of pattern and of space that is reliably irregular. A grid, utilised by many artists, speaks to an unending expanse, measurement, vertical and horizontal axes of graphs, and to the lines of text that in a more familiar form of a book run horizontally across a page. Agnes Martin’s paintings, for example, ‘can ... be identified with unspoken and not fully articulated writing’, her works cross-referencing both images and written text (Princenthal 110–111).

Only two colours have been used to print *WAVERING*: viridian green and violet. Jarring and raw on their own, this reduced palette works to create colourful exchanges of energy, and generate visual pulsations and reverberations. The lines of these images vacillate and waver, as they shimmer across the pages. At some points, as images were created by printing one layer of colour and pattern over another, I discovered that the visual activity of this book’s pages veered toward interference and a flickering static that pictured, albeit abstractly, the hectic overlays of information that are continually presented across various news platforms. To see a suggestion of these conversations as images stilled the chatter, for a minute or two.



2 Marian Crawford
WAVERING 2022. Artist book,
printed in an edition of 8,
relief prints & letterpress, 15
X 21 X 0.4cm. *Photography:*
Tim Gresham.

Solitary words associated with the adjective *wavering* are printed in juxtaposition to the image-filled pages. The book draws on the precedent of the dictionary, and the thesaurus, the favourite book of poets. A thesaurus powerfully demonstrates the chains of association that are summoned by any single word. *WAVERING*’s letterpress printed texts draw on each printed word’s exponential signifying capacity, and also extend the signifying possibilities of the book’s images, its unsteady grids, as the words are absorbed in the presence of the adjacent images.

In another extension, this association of texts and images then presents a subtle inventory of the vacillations of contemporary politics.



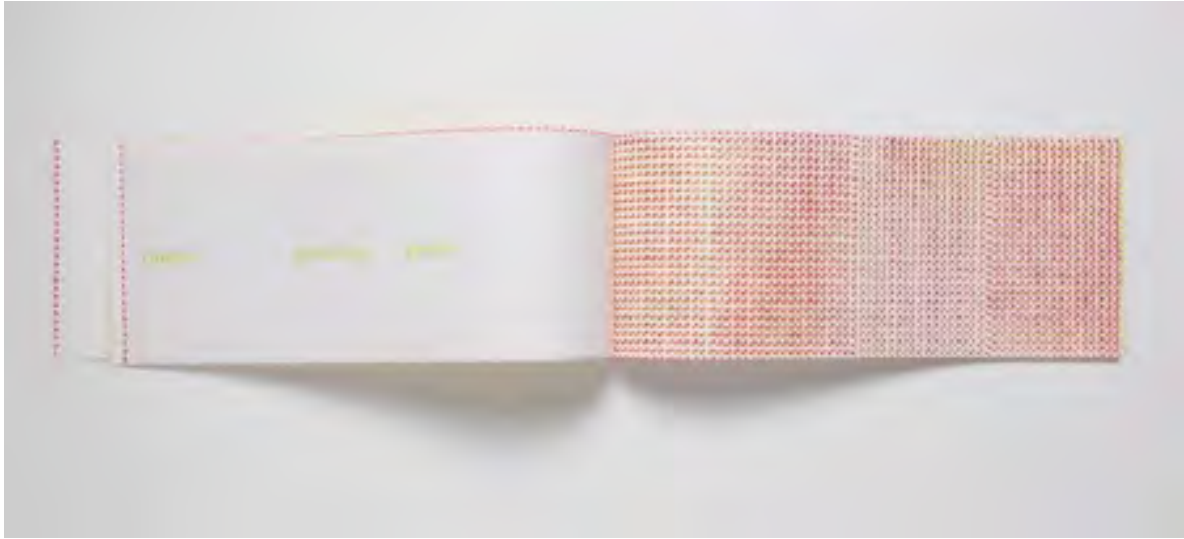
3 Marian Crawford
WAVERING 2022. Artist book, printed in an edition of 8, relief prints & letterpress, 15 X 21 X 0.4cm. Photography: Tim Gresham.

Truth Seeker investigates the character of contemporary politics, and is also initiated by a thesaurus search. Starting with the key word *ruminatio*n, the book's sickly lime green text records sentiments experienced during the conditions of global pandemic: thoughtfulness, speculation, brooding, obsession, worry, truth seeking, disquiet (4–6). This is a sequence of sentiments that has leaked between the social and into the political, as trust was tested, some might argue, to unprecedented levels over 2020–2022.



4 Marian Crawford *Truth Seeker* 2022. Artist book, printed in an edition of 9, relief prints taken from Rhinestone stickers, letterpress, 12 X 30 X 0.4cm. Photography: Tim Gresham.

Images printed from a single matrix – fabricated from sheets of \$2-shop imitation rhinestone stickers – accompany the text. Covering a whole page, the images begin with a single layer of ink in a more-or-less regular pattern. With repetition, and mis-registered and multi-coloured overlays, the dotted images head towards a layered dissonance.



5 Marian Crawford *Truth Seeker* 2022 Artist book, printed in an edition of 9, relief prints taken from Rhinestone stickers, letterpress, 12 X 30 X 0.4cm. Photography: Tim Gresham.

In the world beyond this book, these feelings occasionally spill over into other activities: anxiety, rebellion, truth-questioning.

Rebecca Solnit comments on this tendency: 'Cynicism and despair are predicated on a prophecy of more of the same, or of decline and fall. Every generation believes it has arrived at some final state of awareness about justice, about politics, about possibility, and then the state implodes or is swept aside, critiqued from a recently unimaginable standpoint. Ours will be, too. There are problems of expectation and of focus.' (Solnit 9)

The artist book *Haunts Hantise Haunting*, 2021, draws on shapes that echo across centuries: the vase or amphora, and artefacts found in more contemporary times: the decorative patterns on curtain materials purchased from fabric stores. This book also employs strategies of repetition



6 Marian Crawford *Truth Seeker* 2022 Artist book, printed in an edition of 9, relief prints taken from Rhinestone stickers, letterpress, 12 X 30 X 0.4cm. Photography: Tim Gresham.



7 Marian Crawford *Haunts Hantise Haunting* 2021
Artist book, printed in an edition of 14, relief prints and letterpress, 27 x 16.8 x 1.2cm (closed) and opens to max 27 x 59.5cm spread. (made with thanks to Angela Brennan who is represented by Niagara Galleries). *Photography: Tim Gresham.*

to investigate how an image or pattern might re-surface or be re-purposed. The vase shapes in this book were created by Angela Brennan, drawing on her interest in pre-modern artefacts. Brennan has long considered ‘the question of how pre-modern artefacts may contribute to contemporary practice’ (The Ian Potter Museum of Art). Working with her support and generous encouragement, the book developed as we talked (at a distance) during Melbourne’s 2020 COVID lockdown.

Images repeat across the pages of *Haunts Hantise Haunting*, and their patterned surfaces make new versions of themselves as the pages are turned (7, 8, 9). The pages of the three sections are different in length, but when closed the longer pages of the second and third sections fold in towards the spine. The fore-edge of the book when closed is bulkier than the spine; and the reader can adjust the relationships between pages as the folds are navigated and re-arranged in a variety of combinations.

The printed text read: ‘What is such an obsession? It is something or someone that always comes back, survives everything, reappears at intervals, and expresses a truth concerning an original state of affairs. It is something or someone that one cannot forget, and yet is impossible to recognize clearly.’ (Didi-Huberman 2017 13)

The curtain fabrics, treated as relief printing matrices, are printed in a riot of colours, singly and in layers. A tasselled place-mat was transformed, when printed, into a page of text, its horizontals bisected by the tasselled verticals, like uprights in an un-schooled hand written across a ruled page. These pages operate as both image and text, harking again to Princenthal’s description of the work of Agnes Martin (Princenthal 110–111). Many of the matrices are overlaid with another, in a doubling of information. Fabrics with repeating linear patterns were printed vertically and horizontally, in a repetition creating dissonance and dazzle. Fabrics patterned with dots when printed recall the photographic half-tone dot of analogue pre-press, and doubly dazzle where printed in overlays. The patterns of these fabrics were thus translated, given a new life in another form, a printed image now at home in a book historically built for text, for poetry.



8 9 Marian Crawford *Haunts Hantise Haunting* 2021 Artist book, printed in an edition of 14, relief prints and letterpress, 27 x 16.8 x 1.2cm (closed) and opens to max 27 x 59.5cm spread (made with thanks to Angela Brennan who is represented by Niagara Galleries). *Photography: Tim Gresham.*

The pages, singly, folding and unfolding, transform humble materials. *Haunts Hantise Haunting* houses this playful and various collection. The patterns are repeated and become different, and echo origins that are neither lost nor revisited.

Nancy Princenthal compares Gertrude Stein's poetry to Agnes Martin's paintings: 'The dispersion of attention across the field of the page that Stein's prose and poetry often invite is comparable to the dispersion of attention across the expanses of Martin's paintings. In creating text that tends to be both syntactically negotiable and, at its most difficult, semantically inaccessible, Stein makes the act of reading come close to that of looking.' (Princenthal 113–114) Princenthal also observes that Martin's art is 'an expression of control, which is a source of calm and happiness.' (176)

I found that there was a 'dispersion of attention' and an 'expression of control' in the grids printed to make the pages of these three publications *WAVERING*, *Truth Seeker*, and *Haunts Hantise Haunting*. In a further examination of my responses to the books, I would argue that

there is a calm and pleasurable space to be found in the act of looking and reading (nominating reading is as a sub-set of looking, they are books, after all); a space happily free of, or at least distant from, the very qualities I had initially thought I might document: the wavering inconsistency and doubt-filled static of public opinion.

It is part of the work of the image to suggest the possibility to imagine difference, to imagine a different world. This is particularly clear in the work of artists, where strategies of experimentation and presenting the unexpected are employed. 'Expectation and focus', to use Solnit's terms, can be challenged and adjusted in an encounter with images and where forms once considered inviolable or historic are creatively re-invented. A re-configuring of the form of the book, to find the book anew, might be just the space to suggest 'The Inexhaustible, or Knowledge through Imagination' (Didi-Huberman 2018 3).

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About the author

Marian Crawford is a visual artist whose artworks explore the relationships between the book, fine art printmaking processes, and the printed image in contemporary culture. She has presented her creative works and writings publicly for over twenty years, and is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Monash University Art Design and Architecture.

92 DAYS OF WINTER

A mixed-media experiment embracing uncertainty and imprecision
to locate reassurance in place

Rees Quilford

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Abstract

Our first COVID-19 winter was a time riven by doubt, suffering and existential uncertainty. For many, those experiences hampered, at least initially, our creative inclinations. However, with the benefit of hindsight, the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic have come to be associated with unexpected creativity. For me, a routine of visitation, documentation and mixed-media making provided a creative outlet to try and make some sense of the mass disruption we faced.

Place, it has been said, is a site of self-identification (Gibson, 2015c) and where meaning is made (Plumwood, 2008) and so it was for me. Each day of that arduously uncertain first COVID-19 winter, all ninety-two of them, I visited Cape Paterson's Bay Beach, an unpredictably beautiful and endearing parochial place on Australia's southeast coastline. Using a routine guided by respectful visitation (Muecke, 2008) and aesthetic noticing (Brasier, 2017), I scribbled notes and took Polaroid photographs to document different aspects of that personally significant place. Heeding Ann Hamilton's (2010) call to work from what you know but also what you don't know, it was a routine that embraced ambiguity, imprecision and the affordances offered within mixed-form making methods.

The resultant work, '92 days of winter: swimming, walking and watching', encompasses lyrical mixed-media amalgamations chronicling a particular place, its character, and its indifference to a time of immense disruption. This essay offers a self-reflexive examination of how uncertainty, imperfection and hybrid making practices can offer affecting creative prompts when interrogating the complex, intimate and contested nature of personally significant places.

92 DAYS OF WINTER

Rees Quilford

Winter, Day 1



The physical and spiritual benefits of cold-water swimming have been espoused by many (Bürklein, 2016; Calidas, 2020; Kellermann, 1918) but the disparity in how each individual enters the water is stark. Favouring getting the shock over quickly, I prefer to plunge straight in. My partner, on the other hand, will inch anxiously forward, step by uncomfortable step. Amy can't help but cry out as the chill takes hold. Harnessing the will, she finally dives under, plunging her head and torso into the water. Nahla's approach is somewhere in between. Labradors love the water, and she is no different - loping through belly deep swamp water is a favourite past-time - but her ocean swimming is sometimes more considered. The water is no deterrent, it's the size of the waves that must be gauged, but once she decides to proceed, she commits wholeheartedly. While the method each of us use to connect with the sea differs greatly, all three of us leave the water invigorated and more attuned to our surrounds. The exhilarating experience of immersing our bodies provides a tantalising glimpse of a clarity of thought that has been hitherto absent.

Place as a sanctuary from disruption

Place, it has been said, is a site of self-identification (Gibson, 2015c) and where meaning is made (Plumwood, 2008). The idea of personally significant locations operating as sanctuaries for reflective reassurance and meaning making is particularly appealing given the discomfort, alarm and despair that permeates so many aspects of contemporary existence. With the terrifying existential realities of global warming and continued environmental destruction now

overlaid with the mass trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not flippant to suggest that we live in a time of acute uncertainty. This reality, when considered in relation to notions of creativity, seems to offer curious and somewhat contradictory opportunities. At first glance, hesitancy and a lack of surety seems inclined toward artistic inaction. However, with the benefit of hindsight, we now see the COVID pandemic as a time when unexpected and multifaceted creative experimentation thrived. At least that was my experience. While I acknowledge it was undertaken from an extremely fortunate position of relative affluence and geographic safety, the early stages of the COVID pandemic saw me undertaking an experiment in immersion, inhabitation and documentation of Cape Paterson's Bay Beach. The lyrical collages – involving Polaroid photography and reflective prose – produced from that experiment provided personal learnings on the intricacies and practicalities of making in a disrupted context.

This essay undertakes a self-reflective examination of the process for, and the creative outputs of, my mixed-media work '92 days of winter: swimming, walking and watching' (Quilford, 2021). In doing so, it examines the utility of several creative methodologies for making in disrupted contexts. This includes reference to simultaneously aesthetic and forensic designed artefacts known as 'changescapes' (Gibson, 2015a) and 'memoryscopes' (Gibson, 2015b) which can be used to construct (and reconstruct) systematic comprehension in multifarious settings. Documentation practices embracing active noticing (Brasier, 2017) and the aesthetic possibilities that emerge from heeding Ann Hamilton's (2010) entreaty to embrace both what you know *but also* what you don't know when making are also examined. This is undertaken to explore how uncertainty and imperfection might offer creative avenues to understand and articulate the intimate, contested and complex associations that exist in relation to personally significant places, especially during times of disruption.



Winter, Day 16



Exposure to cold water triggers what is known as a 'cold shock response' – an initial gasp followed by rapid breathing and increased heart rate and blood pressure. Clinical research has shown that regular cold-water swimming can habituate this response quite quickly. A dozen short immersions can significantly dull the shock response (H. Massey & Scully, 2020). Just three weeks into my swimming routine, I already notice the change – entering the ocean is far less bracing. In fact, I increasingly look forward to the icy embrace of solitary winter walks and cold-water baptisms. The routine seems to be stimulating some innate assuredness.

An inadvertent experiment in cold water immersion

It was impulse that heralded me toward a routine of cold water immersion, quiet observation and mixed-media experimentation. The idea took seed late one evening in the first autumn of the COVID-19 pandemic while walking Cape Paterson's Bay Beach. Located on an out-of-the-way section of Australia's southeast coastline, it is a site I have a deep personal connection to. Its unruly beauty, endearing unpredictability, and my longstanding parochial association with it makes it a particularly appealing place, especially in a time of uncertainty. Walking the quiet sands of that relatively secluded and uncouthly majestic place I mused on childhood memories – swimming, rockpooling, adolescent love and tragedy. It's a beach ramble I've completed hundreds of times before but on that particular walk, I was confronted by the contrast between the wistful optimism of my musings and the stark hopelessness I felt for the plight of both humanity and the natural world. During the early stages of the COVID pandemic I, like so many others, experienced almost immobilising feelings of pessimism and crippling hesitation. Enforced isolation, overlaid as it was with the melancholy that accompanied bearing witness to mass suffering and loss, seemed to pervade all aspects of existence. Encompassing creative writing, photographic and multimedia methods, my creative activities often focus on capturing the imprints and fragments

of particular locations, and then trying to cajole them into intimate and affecting histories. The uncertainty that the pandemic had bought to bear had severely curtailed those endeavours. It had impacted my mood, hampered my thinking and inhibited my creative outputs.

Those thoughts of sluggish inertia were front of mind as I looked to the dark expansive ocean and observed its unpredictable presence. Sensing some intangible but undeniable sentience, I felt compelled to swim. Carefully stripping down, I leapt in, and swam on the rising tide. There, in the shelter of the bay, a place of my childhood, I lingered in neck deep water. My thoughts turned to life after death, climate change, corruption, inaction, gaps and disjunctures. Notions of connection and ownership bounced back and forth as did thoughts of my inability to concentrate for any extended period of time. A long and disillusioned winter lay ahead, one typified by ongoing lockdowns and disconnection. However, emerging shivering from that cold uncaring sea, I looked to the clifftops and beheld my surroundings in a different light. I was numb to the core but felt more attuned to the grainy sand between my toes, to the imposing sky overhead and to the sombre waters that surrounded me. I beheld an infinite array of actors, living and inanimate, that call that place home. An unexpected, still largely unformed, inkling had begun to formulate – that rather than hampering my creative inclinations, perhaps the uncertainty that I was beholden to could instead offer imaginative opportunities and artistic stimulation.



Winter, Day 78

The ocean is beautiful today, wondrously so. Clear, so clear that the lines delineating rock and reed from the sand are crisply visible along the sea floor. Along the shoreline, I look to the beach's only other inhabitant. The young woman sketches in the sand with driftwood while her dog sits patiently to one side. Completing her work, she discards the stick, fishes the phone from her pocket, and photographs the message she's left before wandering off. I wait a while before making my way over to read her inscription. A single word 'LITERACY' etched in the sand. The soon-to-be-washed-away poignancy of this sketch resonates. My connection to this beach and the local area is longstanding - I was born and raised here like my father before me - but have lived away for more than twenty years. My mind brims with thoughts and memories as I plunge into the cold blue water. A longing for greater connectedness and knowledge permeates my bare skin to query the salutary depths and I feel the urge to find a precise language to express these feelings. This is a place where acts of walking, swimming and observation allow for a form of exchange between self and the landscape (Mills, 2020, p. 128). It is these notions that motivate my repeated visits to this beach, where elusive moments of literacy can be found in place.

Locating and observing complex and contradictory associations

Seeking to replicate and interrogate the fleeting sense of clarity I experienced in the moments following my exit from those sombre waters saw me embark on a daily routine of inhabitation and documentation. My creative mix-media work '92 days of winter: swimming, walking and watching' (Quilford, 2021) saw me visit Cape Paterson's Bay Beach each day. Once there, I immersed myself in its cold waters then lingered to walk, explore and observe. Using an old Polaroid camera found in a local junk shop and a salt encrusted notebook, I set about documenting different aspects of a place that had so captivated me. The photographs I took were later hand annotated with reflections and provocations inspired by something noticed during the visit or in the image itself.

Reflecting, pondering and speculating on particular features, aspects and associations as well as the aesthetically striking qualities that can be observed in a particular place involves puzzling over personal biases, memories and embodied experiences. Like all places, Cape Paterson's Bay Beach can be perceived in Latourian (2000, 2005) terms whereby the non-human and human actants of the social and natural worlds exist in continuously fluctuating networks of relationships. Doreen Massey (1994, 2005) whose conceptualisations of cultural geography have made a significant contribution to place-based thinking (Legendijk et al., 2011, p. 163) highlights the complex and multifaced nature of place. It is a contested and eventful assemblage rather than a fixed stable entity. This foregrounding of innate complexity recognises that places are constantly coming into being, reimagined and understood through the way they are re-told, processed, and practiced.

Acknowledging the possibility of multiplicity and contemporaneous plurality in relation to the Bay Beach positions it as a porous setting in which any number of distinct trajectories coexist. One can observe any number of surprising amalgams, relations that bridge divides and demand new ways of looking (Luckhurst, 2006). This approach perceives and values the associations that exist between rotting piles of seaweed, millions of shell fragments, fluctuating smells, ever shifting sands, tidal ebbs and flows, tangled masses of discarded clothes and fishing line, written diary accounts, memories, babies and elderly couples, and an infinite array of other things.

These multiplicities, fuzzy and raw at the edges, never quite operate as expected. Their dense intricacy also makes them hard to read – as Paul Cilliers (1998, pp. 88-89) suggests, the characteristics of complexity do not readily lend themselves to analysis. In that, the 'object' under evaluation is not, in fact, an object but an event that changes from one moment to the next. This elusive complexity, viewed in relation to Massey's conceptualisations of place as multifarious and ever-changing assemblages, prompts so many different lines of questioning. How does one go about applying alternative interpretations of place when describing them? How do we speculate on specific locations and the instances that occur within them? How do we go about reimagining a place and the occurrences that have happened there?

My process for the '92 days of winter' work aimed to respond to questions such as these. As a routine enabling experimentation with different media forms, it became a forensic yet poetic exercise in quiet observation. A means to grapple with notions of the local and the global, a way to explore public and private musings, and an interrogation of embodied intimacy. In detailing the intricately complex yet strikingly robust assemblages I observed in that place, I wanted to echo the revelatory argument made by Katie Ritson (2018, p.2) that any uncertainty about what we humans unleash is offset by a sure knowledge that the agency of the natural world will outlast our own. Importantly, it was a routine that also offered a creative avenue to examine my relationship to a particular (and special) place, one that attempted to understand how that connection was being disrupted.



Winter, Day 33



The front arrived overnight, bringing steady rain and squally winds with it. The unseasonal mild weather of the past month might be the new normal in our rapidly warming world - recent Australian National University modelling indicates that by 2050 Tasmania will be the only region in Australia with a discernible winter (ANU, 2019). Just a week ago, reports noted the mercury in the Siberian town of Verkhoyansk tipped more than a hundred degrees Fahrenheit (38C) - the hottest temperature ever recorded north of the Arctic Circle (Freedman, 2020). Those utterly terrifying revelations have been rendered insidiously distant by the immediacy of rising COVID infections and today's chilly rain. Relishing the change, I wait for a proper deluge before venturing to the beach. I hurry over the soddened sand. A deserted beach cast in a blackish hue by the pall of cold droplets falling from the heavens. That rain stings my bare skin as I dawdle in waist deep water. Swimming in the rain is one of life's great joys. As the familiar icy embrace envelopes me, I watch the rain meet the sea. Millions upon millions of tiny little collisions rippling on the surface around me. Beauty and brilliance in each collision. Linger to bear witness I wonder how this pandemic is obscuring the urgency of global warming - the most significant threat to our long-term survival.

Making sense of things using documentation and designed artefacts

Designed artefacts have long been used to help us understand, accept and inhabit the complexity of our surrounds. The artist and scholar Ross Gibson writes of 'changescapes' (2015a) and 'memoryscopes' (2015b) simultaneously aesthetic and forensic artefacts, which he suggests offer a means through which to reconstruct some measure of systematic comprehension of multifarious settings. Given the fear, doubt and uncertainty that typified my experience of the first months of the COVID pandemic, the dynamic and hybrid nature of the forms described by Gibson seemed to offer creative cues through which to document the place I routinely inhabited, engaged with and craved understanding of. As such, the approach I devised to guide my '92

days of winter' experimentation embraced many of the characteristics Gibson espouses. This entailed embracing an approach of simultaneous acts of remembrance and poetic speculation. Embodied inhabitation and active observation were harnessed to animate my speculative and imaginative reading of the place. Emotional and credible responses were heeded and harnessed to guide the documentation of the actants, associations and connections that could be observed. However, this creative examination also attempted to remain attuned to the gaps and absences. For example, the lack of meaningful representation or even acknowledgement of Indigenous traditional owner groups was a reoccurring refrain.

The relevance of undertaking concerted acts of creativity and contemplation seems even more pertinent given the disquiet that pervades so many aspects of modern life. Jeff Sparrow (2020) highlights an insidious collective trepidation that has built exponentially in recent years as a result of bearing witness to multiple disasters. He suggests that "coronavirus offers a terrifying glimpse of the future, allowing us to see what might happen as catastrophic manifestations of climate change – such as prolonged bushfires – become commonplace." That COVID followed so quickly after those calamitous Australian wildfires of 2019 certainly impacted on my personal wellbeing. It contaminated my perspective on things. I imagine many others experienced similar feelings of despairing disaffection at various times. Personally, these experiences certainly inhibited my creative inclinations.

The COVID pandemic has seen borders close, open, then shut again. Our movement has been curtailed. Cities and countries have been locked down, in some cases for years at a time. Hospitals and entire healthcare systems were overwhelmed. Hundreds of millions of people have fallen ill, millions have died. The brief optimism that accompanied witnessing nature reassert itself during the lockdowns disappeared as globalised trade and movement returned to business as usual. Our natural surrounds are getting hotter, wetter, windier and unhealthier. Species and habitats continue to disappear. Waterways and seas choke with plastic. In many places throughout the world, you can't see the sky for the smog. The stark reality of humanities continued destruction of its surrounds is unrelenting.

Yet the pandemonium COVID caused doesn't seem to have dampened our curiosity nor our creative instincts. Far from it. Amid all the turmoil and degradation, countless individuals who previously didn't dabble with the (often dismissively) termed 'creative pursuits' have turned their hand to acts of artistic expression. People have made and performed with furious vigour – crocheting, doodling, singing, tinkering, upcycling, baking, and who knows what else. Fear and trepidation are being offset by innovation and creation. We have turned to creativity in search of reassurance and meaning.

The therapeutic benefits of making as a means to cope with, and process, trauma are well documented (Park & Blumberg, 2002; Smyth & Helm, 2003). Seemingly futile acts of creativity can be both energising and inspiring in my experience. As an exercise in immersion, inhabitation and documentation my '92 days of winter' experiment provided personally useful insights on the intricacies and practicalities of making in a disrupted context.



Winter, Day 8

The monotone palette of the film suits the gloomy tone of the day. Heavy grey skies and seas indicate a change is on the way. That gloominess echoes the sorry state of the Life Saving Clubhouse perched atop the dunes. A once in a decade flood washed out the building's footings more than a year ago and it has sat depressed, discarded, and neglected since. This hollow building with a vantage over melancholic skies and troubled waters. An unpolished overexposed expression - where unfinished edges bleed off crisp white frames - seems apt.

An afterthought that morphed into a routine of documentation and hybrid making

As mentioned, my '92 days of winter' experimentation began as an afterthought but morphed into an ontological interrogation that attempted to cajole imprints and fragments into affecting histories - image and prose renderings of a particular place at a particular moment in time. The mixed-media archive I compiled - 92 inscribed portraits of place - forms a diary of sorts, one that both documents and reflects. It is a chronicle marking time spent at a local beach throughout a winter in which our society, and its people, were riven by uncertainty and trauma.

The analogy of diarying seems apt. In their article for 'The Conversation' Kim Munro, Peta Murray & Stayci Taylor (2020) suggest that by asking us to attend to *this* day a ritual of journaling offers an alternative, and potentially therapeutic, means to mark time. The time I marked at the Cape Paterson Bay Beach resulted in a sizable archive. The imprints and fragments amassed included: a sizable array of annotated polaroids, each capturing different aspects of the place, one for every day of the season; a cache of surplus polaroids - extra images, photo failures and damaged shots - some annotated, others not; and approximately 25,000 words of written prose reflecting on the place, its history, its memories and its idiosyncrasies.

The form of, and process for compiling and composing, this archive and its resultant poetic amalgamations encompassed a dialectical exchange between image and text. The photographic component captured a particular aspect of the place at a specific moment in time. Written prose was then used to reflect, speculate and contextualise. This act of simultaneous documentation

and poetic speculation imprinted subjective renderings of place as mixed form amalgamations. Combining imagery and prose in this way affords opportunities to draw surprising contrasts and highlight unexpected associations. For example, the dissipating foam of a wave lingering on the tide line can be set against singing fish and thoughts of unrealised possibility. A misplaced pair of salt-encrusted underwear can be used to offer clues to the propensity to selectively delineate our ecological footprint and privilege certain places at the expense of others. I found the intrinsic duality and aesthetic contrasts afforded by the juxtaposition of image and text provided affecting and highly intimate avenues through which to filter and reflect upon my surrounds and their historical context. For me, a routine and method that embraced mixed-media making afforded avenues for reassurance, whereby some measure of systematic comprehension could be formulated of the place and the disrupted historical context I found myself in.



Winter, Day 35

Seated in a secluded hollow in the dunes, I observe the coming and goings of this small part of the world. The beach is sparse for a weekend, rising COVID-19 infections continue to feed an overwhelming sense of foreboding.

While people bunker down, I watch and wait. Movement at the eastern end of the bay grabs my attention. Topping the sand spit, a young boy makes his return from the adjoining bay. Walking with slow purpose, he looks to be alone, but his parents soon appear trailing a couple of hundred metres behind. I wait patiently. A beat follows the beat before. The boy walks into shot, one framed by the bay. Depressing the button, the polaroid mechanism whirs to life. The boy's dark silhouette is captured mid stride, head slightly bowed, alone in that bordered view with only the calm grey ocean at his back for company. Solitary but by no means alone, a situation reflective of the one which we all seem to find ourselves in.

Embracing exchanges, resistance, intimacy and aesthetic noticing

If we perceive, as I do, that walking and swimming are both forms of exchange (Mills, 2020, p. 128) then we must also acknowledge that they are accompanied by innate resistance. These interactions occur in the context that John Law (1999, pp. 6–7) terms topographical complexity and fractionality. Physical friction is caused by the act of propelling ones' body over the sand and through the water but there is also an emotional resistance involved in cold-water ocean swimming. Some level of physical discomfort always accompanies the need to overcome an innate fear of the unknown, which arises from an uncertainty about what lurks beneath the waves. These resistances and discomforts heighten the senses, bringing the detail and characteristics of our surrounds into sharp focus. This physical reaction aids our ability to notice potential threats, but it also allows us to perceive beauty, complexity, associations and contradictions.

Writing on methodologies of aesthetic noticing in relation to interactive documentary practices Hannah Braiser (2017) suggests that close attention to discrete moments can de-centre the documentation process. This, she suggests, can facilitate the assembly of imagery that embraces the multiple, the unpredictable and is reflective of flux. The routine developed for my '92 days of winter' experiment embraced this notion. In practice, this entailed allowing the physical and emotional reactions – prompted by my embodied experience of the place itself – to inform which objects, aspects and associations were (and were not) documented. Embracing aesthetic noticing provided an immediate and unfiltered means to capture and record the complex and contradictory aspects of the place. It provided a technique to perceive, and respond to, the Bay Beach's multifaceted splendour, its complex ugliness and ferocity as well as the quirky and eccentric assemblages it embodied.

The eminent historian and anthropologist Greg Denning suggested that knowledge of past events, and cultural literacy, materialises from intimate and physical interaction with records and/or objects from the past (1998, p. 42). This certainly aligns with my experience compiling the '92 days of winter' suite. The numerous intimate and speculative interactions I had with my bespoke place-based archive of prose/Polaroid amalgams certainly improved my literacy of the highly disrupted cultural and historical context I occupied at the time. The documentation and making process – guided as it was by embracing aesthetic noticing practices and embodied visitation experiences – also fundamentally changed how I perceived the place itself.



Winter, Day 34

I tread a different path to the beach today, taking the narrow scrubby track that leads from the eastern end of the rotunda park down to the ocean. Walking that path, you can't help but feel the density of the rearing clifftop to the right. It's a feeling somewhat offset by the sparseness of the scrub that covers the dunes to the left. A series of hallows line the cliff face, one of which is said to have been inhabited by an old recluse in the early 1900s. The photograph I capture is blurred and indistinct but I am ok with that. I make no claims to photographic proficiency. I prefer the imperfect and damaged shots. The indistinguishable and foreboding shapes of today's photograph echo the uncertainty of our times.

Embracing uncertainty and imperfection as creative prompts

Rather than shying away from uncertainty, my visitation and inhabitation of Cape Paterson's Bay Beach embraced it. More often than not, the innate multifarious, ambiguous and ever-changing nature of place (D. Massey, 1994, 2005) – which I repeatedly observed at Cape Paterson's Bay Beach – offered creative prompts. Heeding Ann Hamilton's (2010) call to work from what you know *but also* what you don't know in making process offered a highly enlightening guide. As she suggests in her wonderfully evocative essay *Making Not Knowing*:

One doesn't arrive—in words or in art—by necessarily knowing where one is going. In every work of art something appears that does not previously exist, and so, by default, you work from what you know and what you don't know.

(Hamilton, 2010, p. 68)

The innate risk involved in this method – whereby the artist/maker actively seeks the opaque then sees what and where that leads to – seems, at first glance, quite daunting. It is, however, also a remarkably suitable fit for the disrupted societal and natural context we inhabit. Given our current circumstances, adopting an uninhibited and indeterminate

creative approach – one capable of adapting and responding to ever-changing contexts – seems both appropriate and liberating.

Many of the amalgamations featured within my ‘92 days of winter’ suite foreground uncertainty. Indeed, the approach I adopted for both the writing and the photography actively embraced unpolished and spontaneous acts. The initial compilation of both images and prose abandoned any pretence of careful composition. As touched upon in the previous section, I instead attempted to embrace serendipitous acts of noticing. For the photography, that simply involved deferring to instinctive acts of point and shoot at times. It also entailed seeking conduits for aesthetic happenstance, be that through active disruption of the camera mechanism and using degraded film to see what aesthetic idiosyncrasies and opportunities might emerge from disrupted, damaged and over-exposed photography.

The writing process was twofold. Thoughts, notes and reflections were initially simply jotted into a notebook while in situ. That prose was supplemented and extended through subsequent periods of ‘freewriting’. Over the three month period, I dedicated an hour or so each evening to that open-ended writing technique, the method for which has been likened to brainstorming in sentences (R. Murray, 2011, p. 108). While topics shifted freely and ideas were approached from different angles, the experience and memory of a given day’s visit to the Bay Beach always acted as the primary prompt. It was prose written then simply put aside. It wasn’t revisited, reviewed, amended or edited until the entire immersive process had been completed. I found freewriting to be a useful avenue for expressive exposition on the characteristics, aspects and associations that revealed themselves during my quiet inhabitation and observation of the Bay Beach. As a creative method I found it encouraged subjectivity of both thinking and writing. Foregrounding one’s partiality is often disparaged in academic discussion but as Rowena Murray (2011, p. 103) points out, this type of writing offers a counterpoint as it “implies that subjectivity has value: it helps writers work their relationship to knowledge, an important first step in mastering and assimilating knowledge generated by others”. I believe this sustained yet actively subjective writing process, combined and prompted as it was by photographic prompts, facilitated self-guided progression toward hybrid musings, speculative fusions and lyrical contasts.



Winter, Day 57

Given the inherently subjective and introspective nature of this exercise in embodied observation, the motivation underpinning the compilation of this archive needs to be unpicked. I see it as an attempt to bear witness on a particular place during a particularly unsettled time. It is an act of documentation, one charting my experience of returning to the place of my childhood after many years away, one actively observing the turning of a season and the urgency of our time. Visiting the same place each and every day, I have aimed to capture a different aspect - from jagged shores to vestiges of beach life long gone - in the hope that someone else, somewhere else, in some other time, might glean some insight, pleasure or apperception from these records.

Imprecision and imperfection as cues for poetic contrasts

Returning to notions of uncertainty, interestingly one of the more intriguing ways that ambiguity influenced the '92 days of winter' suite was through the inherent imprecision of Polaroid photography. I have always found it a fickle medium - particularly when using an old camera, neglected film as well as an unrefined and unpracticed technique. Taking a somewhat laissez-faire attitude to the technical and compositional aspects of my photographic routine resulted in what would be construed by many as photo failures - images that were either over or under exposed, damaged shots or did not develop at all. However, that inclination toward a rough imprecision delivered more thought-provoking aesthetic outcomes as the flawed, blemished and damaged shots were often the most intriguing and poetic. Eccentric elegance, I found, emerged from a leaning towards imperfection.

During my visitation of the Bay Beach, I often found that the idiosyncrasies of Polaroid photography offered helpful and unexpected imaginative cues. That the image emerges in situ - fixing a given moment in time into the grain - can offer affecting and evolving provocations. The act

of observing a representation of place emerge in real time (in the developing Polaroid) while still occupying that same location offers diverse and multifaceted imaginative and speculative opportunities. The similarities, contrasts and disjunctures between the record and the physical reality it recounts often prompt startling reconsiderations. For example, reviewing the damaged shot from Day 81 (shown over) – with its obvious inferences to an aerial viewpoint – while sitting in the Bay Beach’s dunes immediately and dramatically altered the way I perceived my surrounds on that particular day. On a more superficial level, the distinct sound of the Polaroid camera mechanism always seemed to offer additional and highly personal creative cues – there is a decidedly beguiling nostalgia to that familiar mechanical whir.



Winter, Day 81

Emerging shivering from the sea, my thoughts turn to the people that have tread this land before me. The Indigenous custodians of these unceded lands and seas are the Yallock-Bulluk of the Bunurong. I think of their loss, the violence of their dispossession, their pain and their sorrow. I also reflect on their hope and of the deep understanding that comes through their continuous connection to this place. Generation upon generation have swum these seas across millennia. Generations to come will likely tread the sands of this place after them and me. A forgotten titbit comes to mind: did you know that just like birds, fish sing to the skies above (Keenan, 2016)?

Creating space for quiet observation, reflection and daydreaming

Taking a moment to reflect upon and question commonly held expectations about how we should spend our time seems to be an exceedingly pertinent thing to do given the times we currently inhabit. Highlighting the negativity so often associated with imaginative acts and undertakings unlikely to deliver utilitarian outcomes, Ann Hamilton writes:

we live in a time when it is especially challenging to articulate the importance of experiences that don't produce anything obvious, aren't easily quantifiable, resist measurement, aren't easily named, are categorically in-between.

(Hamilton, 2010, pp. 70-71)

This point offers a highly relevant touchstone when considering creativity and disrupted contexts – making time and space for daydreaming, speculation and reflection needs to be a driving motivation for those seeking a deeper understanding of their place in, and relationship to, the world. Importantly, this kind of thinking affords opportunities to pay appropriate respect to the complexities of the places we inhabit but also to their Indigenous custodians. On the ethics of visiting country, Stephen Muecke (2008, pp. 84-89) suggests that Indigenous

philosophies of poetics and visiting protocols should apply. Additionally, and importantly, he advocates that visitors to country should be especially alert to the perspectives of their hosts and that they take cultural gifts away with them in the form of stories. While they occupy a somewhat uncertain position, the respectful visitor still seeks to actively engage with Indigenous histories, perspectives and heeds cultural protocols. That involves taking appropriate time and care – walking slowly, treading lightly, observing carefully, listening and noticing. It also involves acknowledging Indigenous people and heeding the rules of their custodianship.

Paying appropriate respect to particular places and their Indigenous custodians is not an uncomplicated endeavor – especially as a privileged white male who has indirectly benefitted from acts of violence and dispossession. However, in the process of compiling the ‘92 days of winter’ suite I found spending thoughtful time at Cape Paterson’s Bay Beach to be highly beneficial in my personal search for greater attunement to Indigenous perspectives. My experiment in embodied but respectful and informed visitation has aided my knowledge of, and appreciation for, the world’s oldest living culture and the careful custodianship which this place benefits from.



Winter, Day 92

My final swim of this journey provides an opportunity to reflect upon the winter just past. A season of intense disruption blighted by suffering, death and despair. One dominated by howling partisan voices spewing vitriol and hate throughout social media, analysis, and commentary. In the face of this dislocation, wrought by fire and plague, I have found myself – after more than two decades away – back at the place of my birth, the place of my childhood and adolescence. This coincidental and privileged return, in the midst of a global pandemic, has raised stark personal questions about connection to place, home and belonging. The upending of fundamental understandings which once seemed so solid has stimulated an acute sense of existential peril. Now today, 92 days or three months on, I have grown more accustomed to the cold. The trick is to plunge straight in. Don't think about it, just wade out into that big blue expanse, and dive into its forgiving embrace – it's an approach that has become my coda.

Reviewing 92 inscribed portraits of place

As a creative exercise responding to place and disruption my '92 days of winter' suite encompasses artistic amalgamations that reflect, and attempt to capture, the associations I observed in Cape Paterson's Bay Beach. The mixed-media artefacts encapsulate thoughts, feelings and the embodied experience of the disrupted context in which they occurred. Close examination of the work reveals many reoccurring themes, patterns and contradictions. Most striking is the battered and faded hues as well as the joyfully inadvertent blemishes and missteps that persist throughout both the prose and the Polaroids. These weathered, have-to-squint-to-make-it-out imprints of place riff and reverberate in both image and text. A battered and faded quality is evident in many of the Polaroids – a bone-weary hue reflective of the relentless weathering persistence of the elements that dominate the place itself. This lethargy is also a theme that reoccurs again and again throughout my diarying and the prose used within the works. That look

and feel echoes how I often encountered and perceived the Bay Beach during that period of time. A degree of disquieting familiarity accompanied each of my visits. It felt like I was reminiscing on a place, memories and occurrences that couldn't quite be recalled in their entirety. This eerie déjà vu – a trick of the memory perhaps – continually prompted a realisation that despite the movement of time (days, weeks, months, years, decades, millennia?) that the place remains largely unchanged. Cape Paterson's Bay Beach, with its gentle waters and soothing sands, offers respite no matter what ills grip the rest of the world. How long this remains the case given the accelerating urgency of the climate crisis is anyone's guess.

Compiling the creative material for the '92 days of winter' suite provided a personal routine of embodied intimacy, poetic reflection and ultimately a form of respite. Visiting the same beach to swim, walk and watch every day was cathartic. It provided an avenue through which I was able to ground myself. I found channeling creative energies into respectful acts of visitation and inhabitation of a particular place afforded opportunities for quiet reflection but also meaning making. Personally, this experience demonstrated that enlightenment and insight can be found through the aesthetic and forensic interrogation of time spent at a particular place. One can only hope that the artefacts produced – conveying as they do the contrasts and unexpected associations afforded by amalgamating imagery and prose – offer creative cues to better understand complexity, place and disruption. However, if nothing else, I take solace in the knowledge that the routine I developed did offer temporary respite from the anxiety and dismay that plagued my thinking at that time.



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OBJECT PERMANENCE

How does the calligramme take shape?

Toby Fitch

University of Sydney, ORCID: 0000-0003-1950-9280

Abstract

This essay defines the poetic form of the calligramme (also known as the pattern poem, or *technopaignia*), provides a micro-history of the form in Western literature, before exploring how, with reference to Apollinaire's *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War* (1913-1916) and Foucault's *This Is Not a Pipe*, the poems in *Object Permanence: Calligrammes* (Puncher & Wattmann/Thorny Devil Press 2022) took shape. It also explores how, via Goethe, the calligrammes use colour, and why, via Piaget, their taking shape is a kind of poetic object permanence.

OBJECT PERMANENCE

Toby Fitch

Poetry has to do with the crystallisation of the imagination—the perfection of new forms as additions to nature. —William Carlos Williams

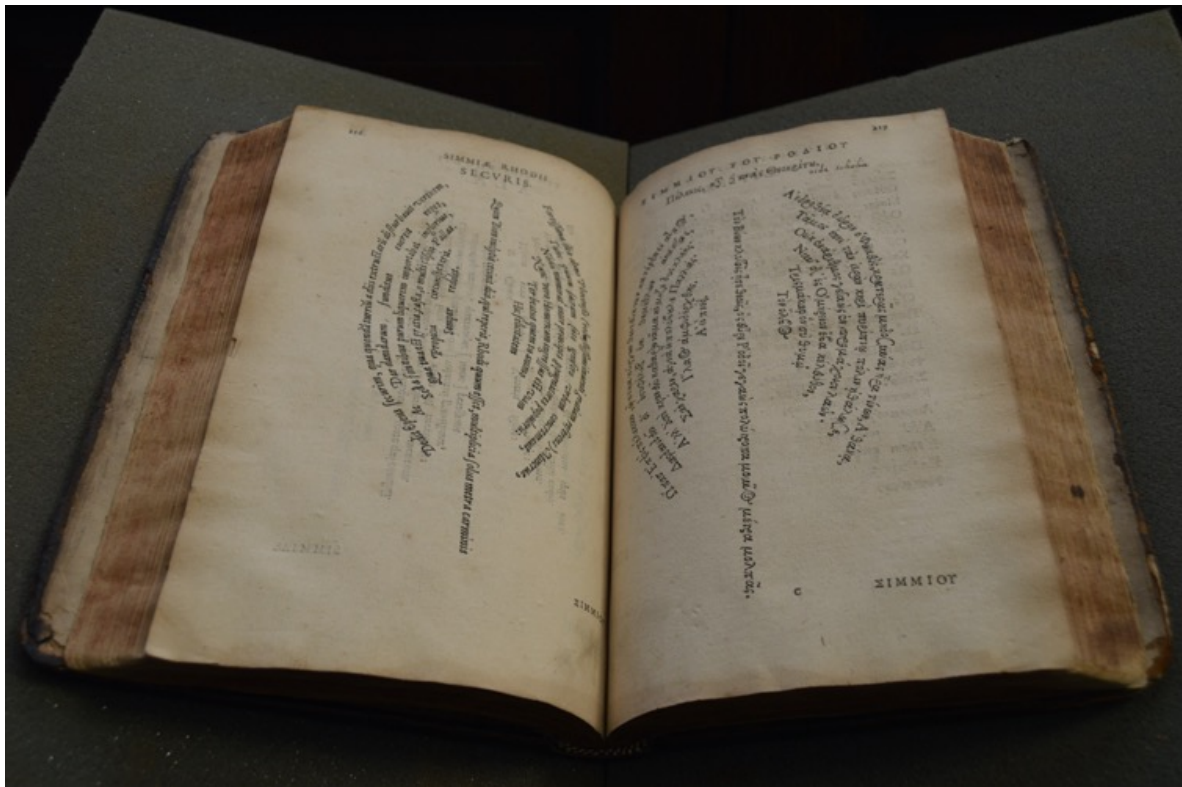
Great works of art cause form to come into being ... The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing ... —Henri Gaudier-Brzeska

In the world, the world of the shaping spirit, save for its patterns, there is nothing new that was not old. For the work of the creators is the mastery and transmutation and recording into shapes of beauty of the given universe within us and without us. The shapes thus wrought are not that universe; they are ‘carved with figures strange and sweet, All made out of the carver’s brain’ [Coleridge]. Yet in that brain the elements and shattered fragments of the figures already lie, and what the carver-creator sees, implicit in the fragments, is the unique and lovely Form.’ —John Livingstone Lowes

Object Permanence: Calligrammes (Puncher & Wattmann/Thorny Devil Press 2022) is a newly expanded, full-colour Australian edition of visual poetry representing more than a decade of experimentation that I’ve been conducting with pattern poetry (or shaped poetry). While I write in many forms, the calligramme has become a kind of signature of mine, much as it was for Apollinaire, with shaped poems dotted throughout my books, as they were in his. *Object Permanence* collects most of my calligrammes together. With their technicolour palette, I like to think the poems are readymade for the twenty-first century’s hyperlinked modes of affect, translation and subjectivity. In *Object Permanence* my aim is for the poems to gesture beyond *technopaignia* (‘games of skill’) toward the forms of human existence on this planet, the ways we shape and are shaped by our world. In this essay, after defining the calligramme (pattern poem) and providing a micro-history of the form, I’ll write about how, after Apollinaire (and a touch of Foucault), calligrammes take shape, how my pattern poems came to exist in colour, and how, via psychologist Jean Piaget, their taking shape is a strange kind of poetic object permanence.

The history of the calligramme tells ‘the story of an ongoing human wish to combine the visual and literary impulses’ (Higgins 1987: 3). Dick Higgins defines a pattern poem as ‘an intermedial poem that is literary, visual, and sometimes social in its conception, usually mimetic in its visual image, in which all of these elements are conveyors of meaning’ (Higgins 1987: 209). He also states, importantly, that the pattern poem ‘reveals its form and interacts with it’ (Higgins 1987: 206).

The calligramme has been around for millennia but has waxed and waned in popularity, certainly in western literature. In ancient Greece, pattern poems were figurative and called *technopaignia*. Collected in the *Greek Anthology* texts, these poems date to the Hellenistic era (3rd to 2nd century B.C.), and of those that have survived, they depict religious or everyday objects, such as altars, wings, axes (1) and musical instruments, and in some cases are suggested to have been inscribed on said objects. Some were mythological riddles, some were inscribed on votive statues; others might have been spells or prayers.



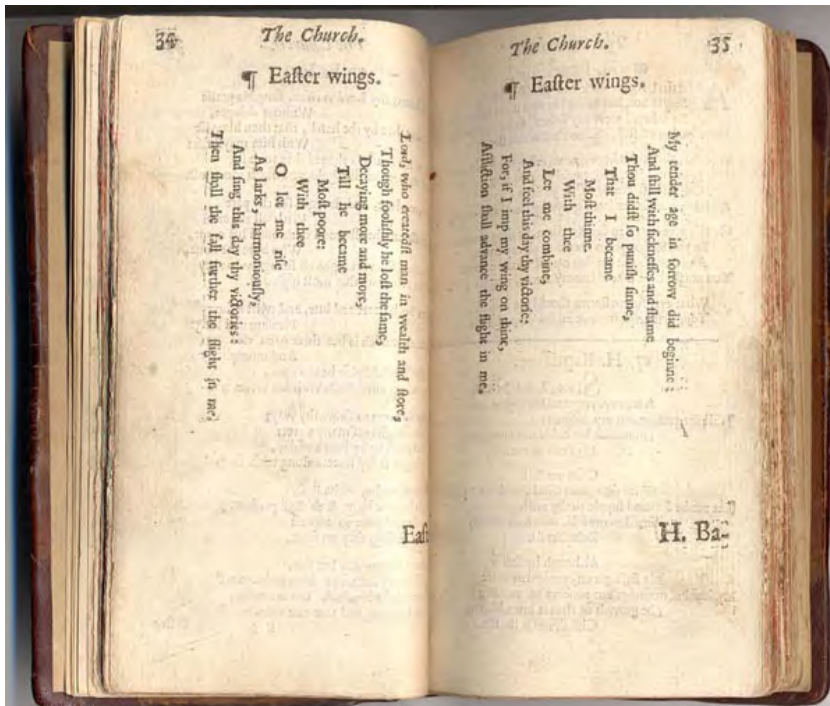
ΘΕΟΚΡΙΤΟΥ.—ΣΤΡΙΓΞ

Οὐδενὸς εὐνάτειρα μακροπτολέμοιο δὲ μάτηρ
 μαίας ἀντιπέτροιο θοὸν τέκεν ἰθυντήρα,
 οὐχὶ κεράσταν, ὃν ποτε θρέψατο ταυροπάτωρ,
 ἀλλ' οὐ πειλιπὲς αἶθε πάρος φρένα τέρμα σάκουσ,
 οὐνομ' ὄλον δίζων, ὃς τᾶς Μέρωπος πόθον
 κούρας γηρυγόνας ἔχε τᾶς ἀνεμώκεος.
 ὃς Μοῖσα λιγὺ πᾶξεν ἰοστεφάνω
 ἔλκος ἄγαλμω πόθοιο πυρισμαράγου,¹
 ὃς σβέσεν ἀνορέαν ἰσαυδέα
 παπποφόνου Τυρίας τ' ἐξήλασεν.² 10
 ᾧ τότε τυφλοφόρων ἐρατὸν
 πῆμα Πάρις θέτο Σιμιχίδας·
 ψυχὰν ᾧ³ βροτοβάμων
 στήτας οἰστρε Σαέττας
 κλωποπάτωρ ἀπάτωρ
 λαρνακόγιε χαρεῖς⁴
 ἀδὺ μελίσδοις
 ἔλλοπι κούρα,
 Καλλιόπα
 νηλεύστω. 20

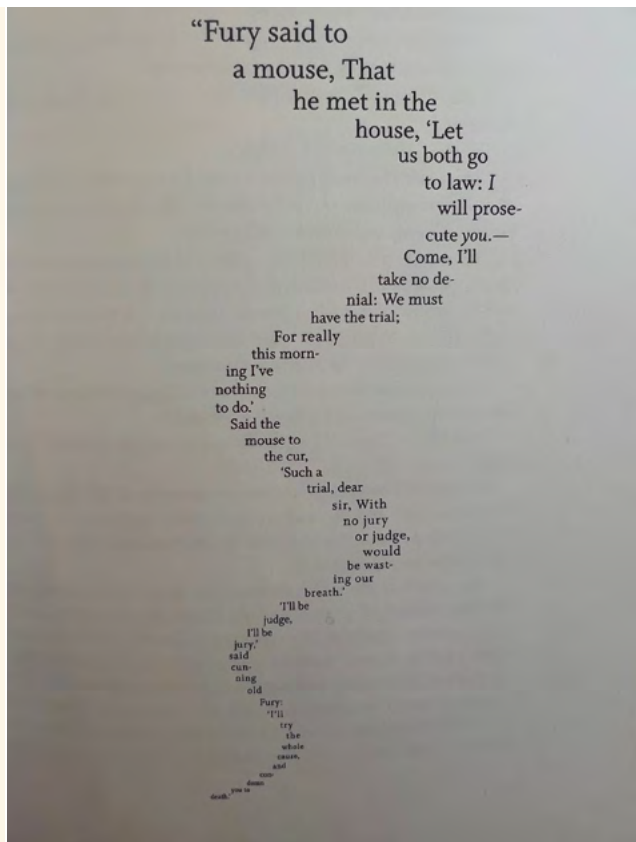
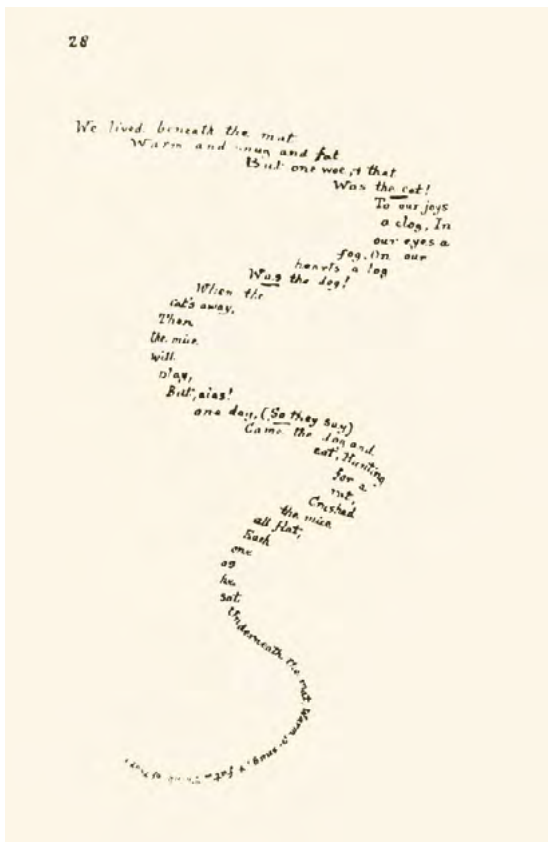
1 'Axe' by Simmias of Rhodes, circa 325 B.C.E. (image in public domain).

2 Theocritus, 'Shepherd's Pipe', from *The Greek Bucolic Poets*, 1912 (image in public domain).

¹ mss also πυρισμαράγου ² so Haeb: mss ἀφελετο or gap
³ ᾧ Hecker: mss ἀει or δ ⁴ χαρεῖς Heck: mss χαίρεις



3 'Easter Wings' by George Herbert, in the 1633 edition of *The Temple* (image in public domain).



4 (left) Lewis Carroll, 'The Mouse's Tail', *Alice's Adventures Underground*, 1863 (image in public domain).

5 (right) Lewis Carroll, 'The Mouse's Tail', *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865 (image from the 2015 edition illustrated by Salvador Dalí).

One of my favourites is a shepherd's pipe (2), by Theocritus, written in pairs/couplets to coincide with the musical notes of the pipe.

After the medieval era, there was a renaissance of pattern poetry, most prominent in British poetry, culminating in the much-referenced 'Easter Wings' by George Herbert (3), which depicts man's suffering for his sins, as well as his subsequent redemption through God.

In the modern era, after another period of hibernation, pattern poems became more complex—even more intermedial and hybridised. Take, as an initial example, the integration of a pattern poem into a novel, Lewis Carroll's 'The Mouse's Tail' (4), from the manuscript, *Alice's Adventures Underground*, 1863. As it was handwritten in the manuscript, it had to be recomposed in moveable type to suit the print edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865 (5). In this delightful calligramme, the shape interacts with the composition, or rather acts upon it. See the enjambment of the word 'prosecute': 'prose-/cute'. And yes, the prose here is cute, and so is the shape's general affect.

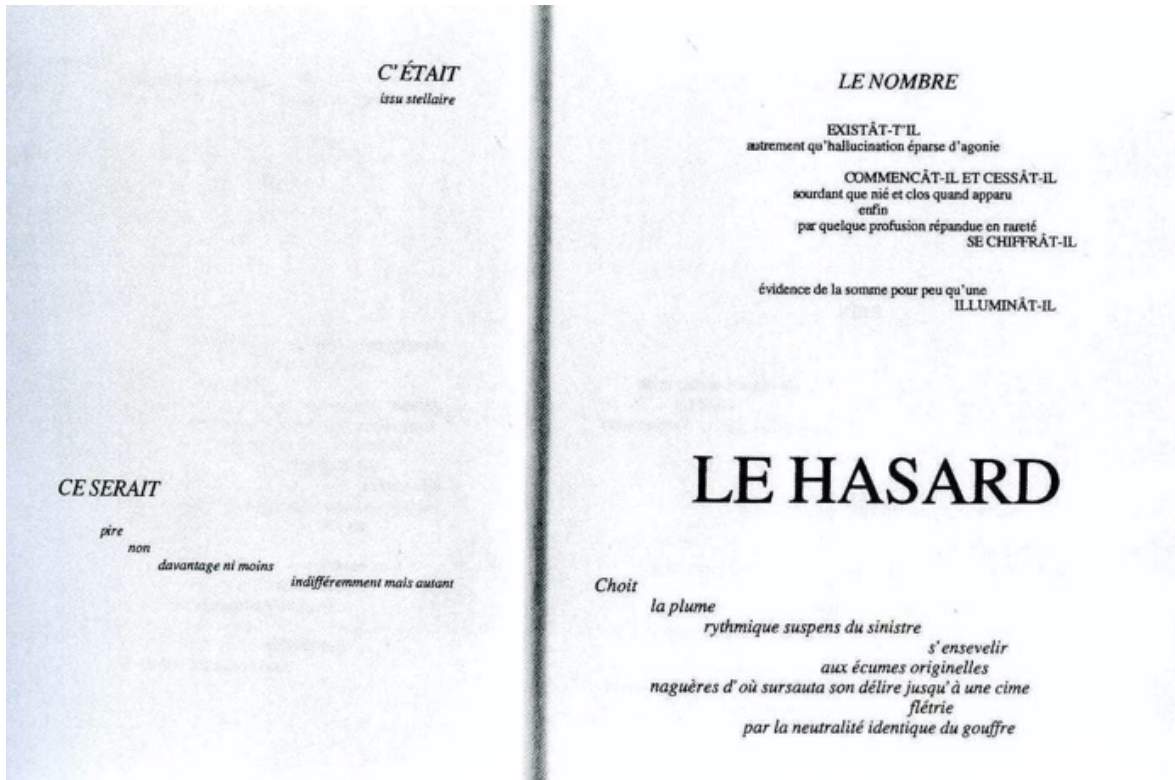
Moving now to something less cute and more complex: Stéphane Mallarmé's 1897 proto visual poem *Un Coup de dés*. Its full title, *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira hasard*, spaced throughout the poem, translates most often to 'A roll of the dice will never abolish chance'. A couple of decades prior to publishing this work, Mallarmé wrote, 'I am inventing a language that must necessarily burst forth from a very new poetics, that could be defined in a couple of words: paint not the thing but the effect it produces' (Mallarmé, in Lloyd 2005: 48),¹ and the depiction of chance and its effects can be seen in the shapes of the poem (6).

Spaced across 11 double-page spreads, with fragments of text in different font sizes, which can be read in a multitude of directions, we can divine our own way through what look like rocks emerging from the white waves of the page, or constellations in the sky. These visual metaphors make up some of the actual imagery in the poem too, a poem that depicts a Master standing in his shipwreck with a die in his fist shaking at the sky the way meaning in the poem oscillates. What I'm suggesting here is that *Un Coup de dés* can also be read as a calligramme, i.e. that its shape, its look, is integral to its meaning-making.

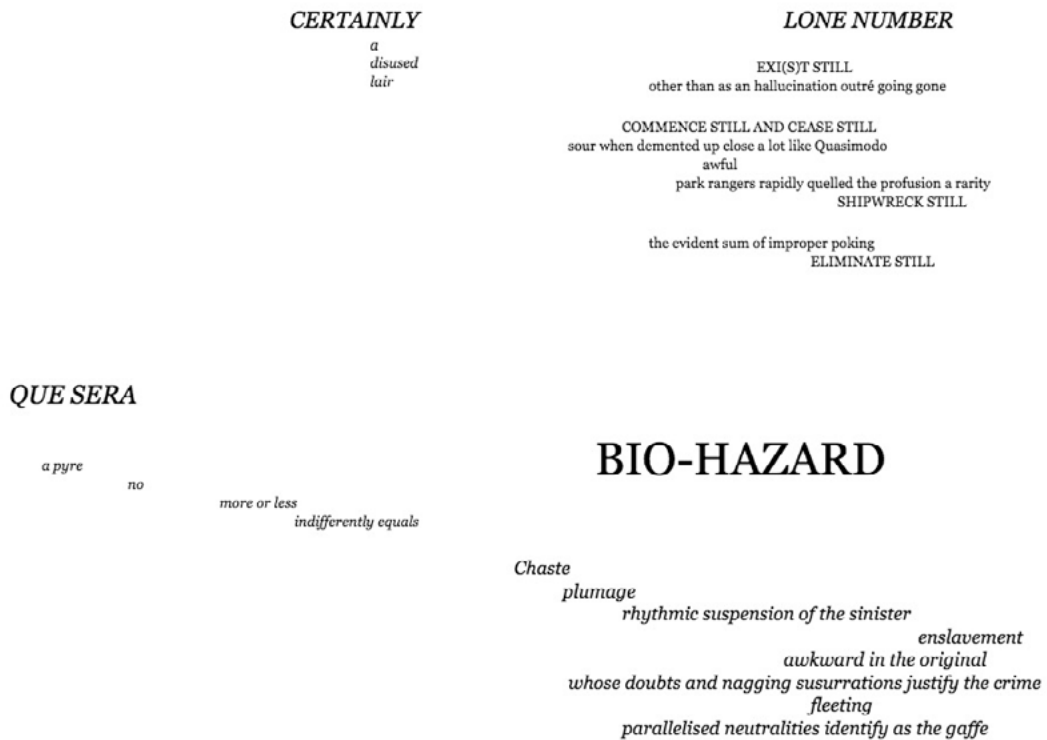
Mallarmé's poem has had a lasting influence—on poetry more broadly and its use of the page, on conceptual art (see, most notably, Marcel Broodthaers), and perhaps uniquely on Australian poets: Christopher Brennan, whose handwritten 'Musicopoematagraphoscope', created the same year as *Un Coup de dés* (1897, though not published until 1981), loosely imitates the layout style Mallarmé invented and operates as a riposte to Brennan's Australian critics; and Chris Edwards, whose *A Fluke: A mistranslation of Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Un coup de dés...' with parallel French pretext from 2006* (7) is a similar-sounding look-alike, a homophonic parody of the original. I've written about these versions of *Un Coup de dés* elsewhere, [here](#) and [here](#), but I mention them now because some of my visual poems operate similarly as 'new' versions (or *inversions*) and translations (or *mistranslations*) of 'old' works.

Post-Mallarmé, in the early twentieth century, there was a reinvention of pattern poetry led by Guillaume Apollinaire, with his shaped, either handwritten or printed, lyric calligrammes in *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War (1913-1916)*:

From simple lines of everyday objects to visual ballets of complicated counterpoint ...
the poems swirl into themselves, swoop into the air, or advance toward the reader.



6 A double-page spread from *Un Coup de dés* by Stéphane Mallarmé, 1897 (image in public domain).



7 A double-page spread from *A Fluke* by Chris Edwards, 2006.

There is a surprising amount of movement, in direct opposition to traditional figurative poetry, which is entirely static (Bohn 1993: 49).

When Apollinaire's pattern poems were criticised by Félicien Fagus for being naive and too simple, like post-medieval examples by Rabelais and Panard, Apollinaire had this response (which was no doubt also directed at critics who had called his pattern poems a 'harmless game', 'rather childish' and 'visual nonsense'):

M Fagus is right: in my poetry I have simply returned to basic principles since the ideogram is the fundamental principle of writing. However, the difference between my poems and the examples he cites is like that between a toy automobile of the sixteenth century, powered by clockwork springs, and a modern racing car. The solitary shapes by Rabelais and Panard lack expressiveness, like the other typographical drawings, whereas the relations between the juxtaposed figures in one of my poems are as expressive as the words that compose it. And this at least, I think, is a new invention (Apollinaire, in Bohn 1993: 47-8).²

After Mallarmé's prismatic subdivisions of the Idea, Apollinaire continues the application of playful linguistic techniques to the visual techniques of pattern poetry, 'freely employ[ing] not verses but phrases, words, even individual letters' in designed objects (Décaudin, in Bohn 1993: 50). In *Towards Design in Poetry*, Eric Mottram writes that 'the designed object combines choice and necessity, as it organises and notates energy, bending, compressing, stretching, splitting, cutting, melting, vapourising, and redistributing for delight and enlightenment' (Mottram 2005: 9), and these effects can be seen in Apollinaire's calligrammes.

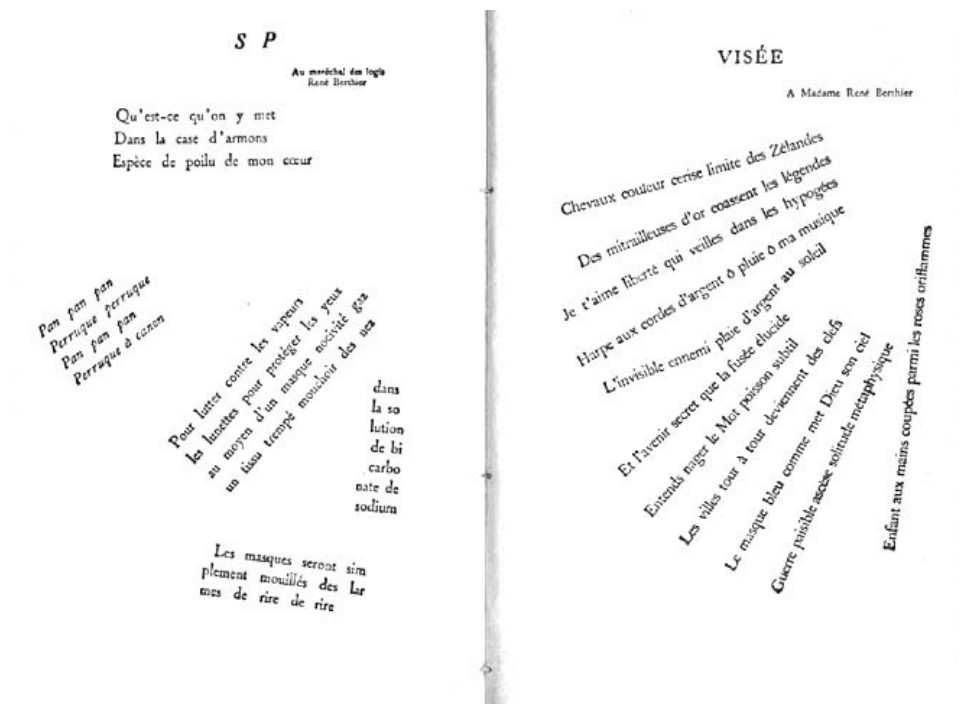
According to Willard Bohn, such technique 'in part corresponds to [Apollinaire's] growing insistence on the aesthetic, existential, and psychological function of artistic discontinuity as a reflection of modern experience' (Bohn 1993: 50). Hence Apollinaire's use of what he called *figures juxtaposées* (juxtaposing figures), and his insistence on the *rappports* (i.e. relations/correspondences) (Bohn 1993: 56) between things—within the calligrammes themselves, between the calligrammes, i.e. intercalligrammatically, *and* in the correspondences between things among the disjunctures of modern life, what with modern life's rapid technological and cultural advancements at the time, including trains, planes, automobiles, war, photography, the telegraph, the phonograph, cinema and advertising.

La Petite Auto ('The Little Car' (8)), a poem that begins as a left-justified free verse lyric poem depicting Apollinaire's escape from occupied France into Belgium, but that finishes with a calligramme of the car they drove in, becomes a kind of implicit ode to the automobile.

In *S P* ('S P') and *Visée* ('Aim') (9) we can see representational lyrics of cannons and their cannon fire through the air, respectively. These two calligrammes sit next to



⁸ Guillaume Apollinaire, excerpt from *La Petite Auto*, 1918.³



9 Apollinaire, *S P* and *Visée*, as laid out in *Calligrammes*, 1918 (image in public domain).

each other in *Calligrammes* and the two together are an example of ‘rapports’ and the inter-calligrammatic:

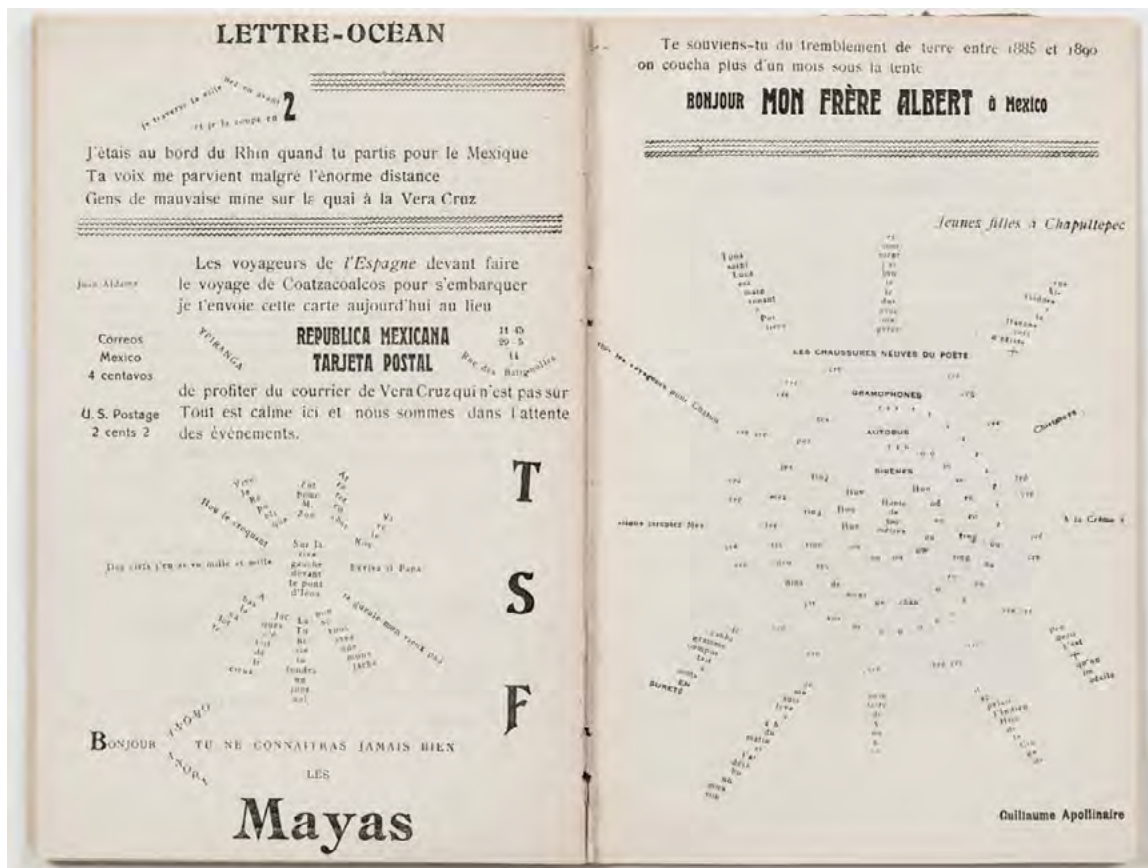
In *Il pleut* (‘It’s raining’) (10), even in translation (by Anne Hyde Greet) the poem shows off Apollinaire’s aforementioned expressiveness:

its raining womens voices as if they were dead even in memory
 its raining you too marvelous encounters of my life oh droplets
 and those clouds rear and begin to whinny a universe of auricular cities
 listen to it rain while regret and disdain weep an ancient music
 listen to the the fetters falling that bind you high and low

His most complex calligramme is his very first, *Lettre-Océan* (‘Ocean-Letter’) (11). The poem is a poetic correspondence with his brother Albert, who was sailing for Mexico. Its title, *Lettre-Océan*, concerns the type of messages that passengers at sea could send to shore, transmitting them from ship to ship by telegraph—a modern mode of communication that converted its messages into an abstract binary code of dots and dashes. The French acronym ‘TSF’ (*transmission sans fil* [wireless transmission]) unites the two halves of the poem. Working visually as well as verbally, with fragments of speech and sound, it foregrounds the workings of language and makes the lyric voice a site of tension between orality and the written word. And although the circular shapes on each page can be seen as suns, they also represent telegraphic technology—at the centre of each respective circle are the lines *Sur la / rive / gauche / devant / le pont / d’Iéna* (‘On the left bank in front of the Iéna bridge’) and *Haute / de / 300 / mètres* (‘300 meters high’), both alluding to the Eiffel Tower which at the time transmitted telegraphs; while the rays emanating from the circular shapes represent telegraphic messages. The ‘sun’ on the right interrogates a second modern technology—Apollinaire believed, as did others, that within one or two centuries the record would replace the book as the preferred medium for the dissemination of poetic texts



10 (left) Apollinaire, *Il pleut*, 1918.
 11 (below) *Lettre-Océan* ('Ocean-Letter') by Apollinaire, *Les Soirées de Paris* 25 (15 June 1914) (image in public domain).



(Markina 2022). And so, the poem, with its evocations of gramophones and shape of a record emitting sound, interrogates the ambiguous concept of the lyric voice in poetry. As Irina Markina writes:

In *Lettre-Océan*, Apollinaire draws a productive analogy between the record and the poem. Inserted into the calligram, the disk troubles the long-standing critical interpretation of poetry as inhabited by vocal presence, recasting the poetic voice as always mediated and disembodied. Apollinaire therefore proposes an alternate vision of lyric voice, one which is born out of the age-old tension in Western culture between textuality and orality, interrogated anew thanks to the phonograph (Markina 2022).

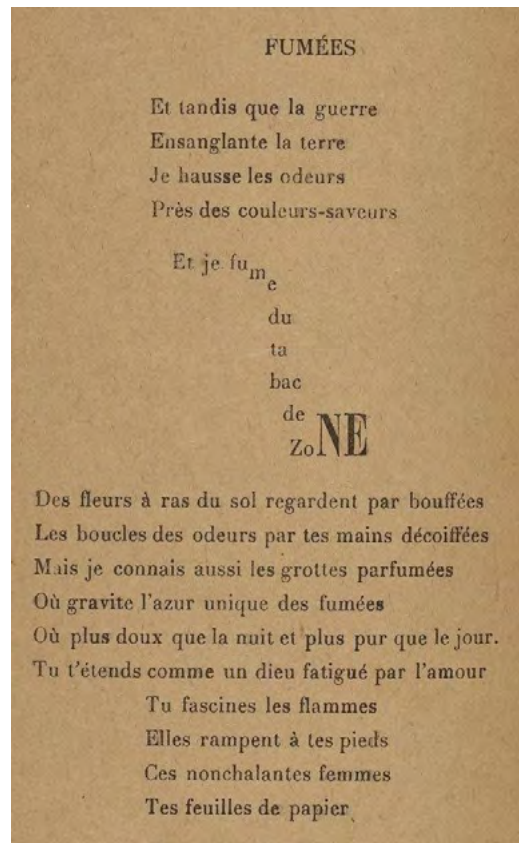
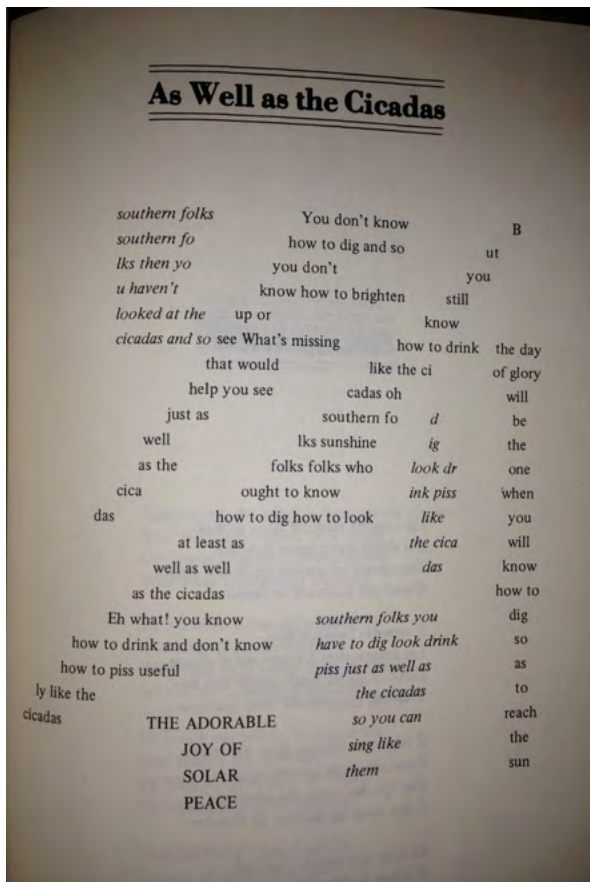
Another plural shape can be found in *Aussi bien que les cigales* ('As Well as the Cicadas', (12)). The cicadas here symbolise Apollinaire himself and his fellow soldiers in the trenches, what with the cicada's defense mechanism of coming up from underground to piss on its enemies. The shape could be both that of a cicada and that of the maze-like trenches. Reading the poem is like navigating a maze from which you don't emerge until the final vertical line: 'the day / of glory / will / be / the / one / when / you / will / know / how to / dig / so / as / to / reach / the / sun' (Greet, in Apollinaire 1980: 282–3).

In *Fumées* ('Smoke' (13)), there is a clear pipe shape in the middle of the poem. This ambiguous poem is likely about the desire for smoking, and by symbolic extension, for the fires of writing poetry. The word 'Zone', accentuated in the pipe shape, refers firstly to the free area where one acquires tobacco while at war (Apollinaire wrote poems and dreamed of writing poems while on the frontline); and secondly, 'Zone' refers to the place where Orpheus, the god of poetry and song, is dismembered by the Maenads after losing Eurydice when returning from the Underworld, his severed body parts and still-singing head thrown into the Hebron river to float away across the lands. 'Zone' is also a reference to Apollinaire's earlier landmark, peripatetic, Futurist, pre-Surrealist long poem of the same name. Organised around a walk through Paris from one sunrise to another, it stretches across time zones (day-night) and follows Apollinaire as he mourns his loss of faith (in a Christian God) and the loss of a lover (à la Orpheus), discarding emotions the way the poem does punctuation. By interchangeably referring to himself as 'you' (using both French forms *tu* and *vous*) and 'I' (*je*), in *Zone* Apollinaire performs the disjointed nature of modern consciousness (Fitch 2016 and 2017).³ So the allusion to *Zone* in *Fumées*, for mine, stokes the coals of the lyric and its fragmentation in the modern world, i.e. this is not a pipe (14).

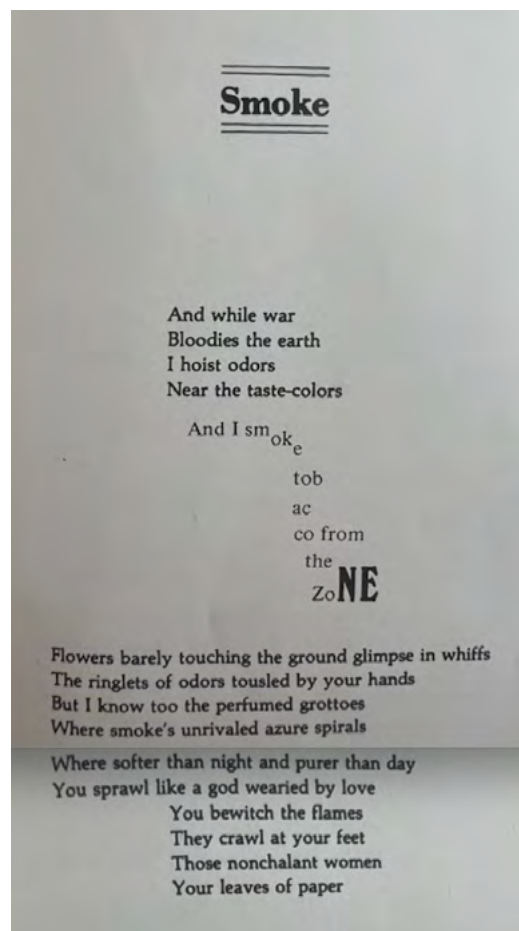
The calligrammatic mode I'm most interested in writing operates like Magritte's painting (14). To quote Michel Foucault:

And at the moment when he should reveal the name, Magritte does so by denying that the object is what it is. Whence comes this strange game, if not from the calligram? From the calligram that says things twice (when once would doubtless do); from the calligram that shuffles what it says over what it shows to hide them from each other? (Foucault 1982: 24)

Apollinaire's poems achieved in their time what Marjorie Perloff later described: 'In the billboard culture [of today], the successful text is one that combines high-speed communication with maximum information' (Perloff 1991: 93). Bohn amplifies this idea when he writes that,



- 12 Apollinaire, *Aussi bien que les cigales*, 1918.
 13 Apollinaire, *Fumées (Smoke)*, 1918
 (French & English versions)..





14 René Magritte, *La Trahison des Images (Ceci n'est pas une pipe)* (*The Treachery of Images (This is not a pipe)*, 1929, oil on canvas, 60.33 cm × 81.12 cm (image in public domain)).

By acquiring some artistic traits, visual poetry satisfies our hunger both for visual and for verbal knowledge. As the biblical metaphor ... suggests, the word becomes flesh. The linguistic skeleton acquires a palpable presence that exerts an immediate effect on the viewer. In contrast to the written (or spoken) message, this effect is direct, instantaneous, and unmediated (Bohn 2013: 14).

And here we're talking about the power of images. W J T Mitchell writes that 'A picture is a very peculiar and paradoxical creature, both concrete and abstract, both a specific individual thing and a symbolic form that embraces a totality' (Mitchell 2005: xvii). By extension, visual images can function either as idols, fetishes, or totems.

Alain-Marie Bassy suggests that the shapes operate like magic symbols in Apollinaire's poetry, where they are cultivated for their *pouvoir initiatique* ('initiatory power'). The power they confer on the poet, he declares, is superior to possession of the objects themselves. From this he concludes that the calligramme constitutes a meditation on its own essence. Stressing its conceptual origins and its existence as a virtual image, Bassy defines the calligramme as a pure signifier, 'ceaselessly signifying itself' (Bassy 1973–74: 165–6). In my opinion, the initiatory power is also for the reader, to show them an immediate impression of the totality of the poem's ideas—high-speed communication with maximum information. It's a kind of visual metonymy that Foucault sees and reads as an abolishing of literary binaries:

Thus the calligram aspires playfully to efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetic civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read (Foucault: 1982 21).

And this is because the calligramme straddles the spectrums between each of these binaries by presenting the extremes together. Apollinaire described it this way:

I have presented here poems where simultaneity in spirit and in the letter since it is impossible to read them without immediately conceiving the simultaneity they express ... in which the poet at the center of life records, so to speak, the surrounding lyricism (Apollinaire, in Bohn 1993: 65-6).⁴

And so, when the 'spirit' and 'letter' are interpreted together, when we see as well as read the poem, we get, as Jean Gérard Lapacherie describes, 'semantic plurality' (*polysémie*). Or as Bohn calls it, a gestalt:

'Only at the conclusion of the poem do the various semantic elements coalesce to form a conceptual gestalt, according to the patterns of expectation that have accumulated' (Bohn 1993: 66).

Metaphor and metonymy interpenetrate one another in a calligramme because of its visual dimension, which insists on the autonomy of the text, and this gives the calligramme a potentially greater immediacy and impact than traditional poetic forms: '

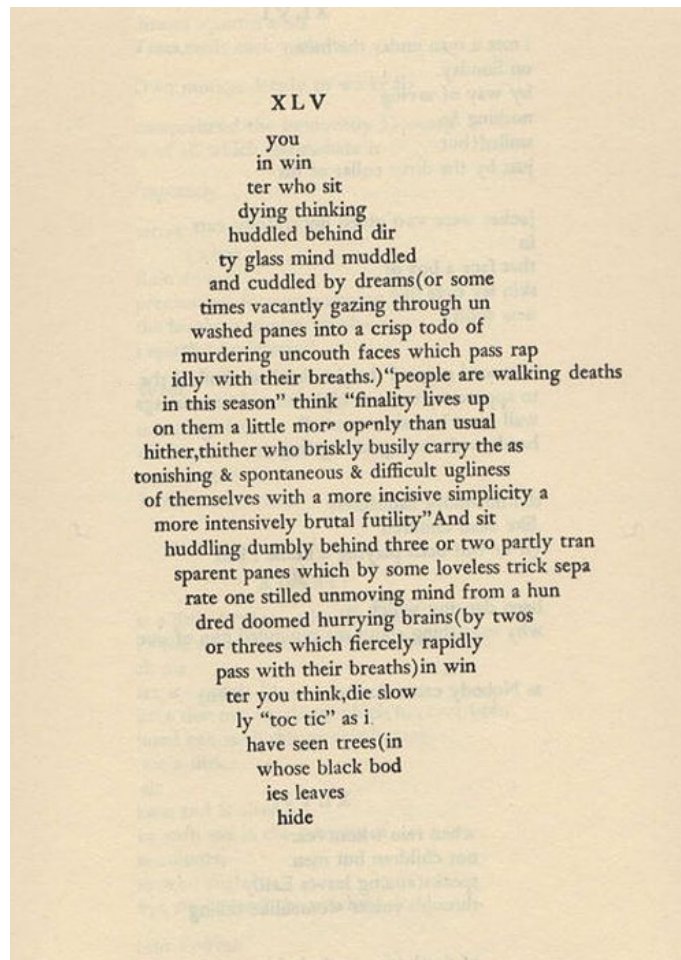
The absence of linguistic mediation not only frees the reader from the constraints of discursive logic; it encourages us to experience the visual forms *as form*' (Bohn 1993: 67). The texts are no longer passive; reading becomes interpretative, indeterminate:

In every case the reader is shocked and disoriented by [the calligramme's] physical appearance, which defies traditional literary values ... The final gestalt depends heavily on the spatialization of the text. On the one hand, the visual shapes focus the imagination, specifying the shape, style, and perspective of the primary object. To the extent that the visual component dominates the text, the latter can be said to have a concrete gestalt. On the other hand, the shapes activate the reader's imagination, which, as its etymology attests, is a highly visual phenomenon. Functioning as visual stimuli, they encourage the reader to create a series of mental images and to relate them to those of the text. Ultimately, the calligrams speak to consciousness itself ... (Bohn 1993: 67-8).

The calligramme's power then is in its dual sign, or, according to Foucault, its 'double cipher' (Foucault 1982: 20). Reflecting, representing and reproducing the primary modes of human perception—sight and sound—the calligramme is powerful because these are the very norms and forms of existence and which inform our consciousness.

Moving along from Apollinaire, this calligramme by ee cummings, 'XLV' (1925) (15), engages sight and sound to explore perception and mortality. The speaker addresses the second-person 'you' as the subject of the poem, and 'you', in the poem, view strangers through a dirty pane of glass who 'fiercely rapidly / pass with their breaths)in win / ter you think die slow / ly'. It's an ambiguous calligrammatic shape, the kind I'm most interested in creating myself: the shape here could be the 'dirty pane of glass' or the 'three or two partly tran / sparent panes' or the subject's reflection or even the 'one stilled unmoving mind' (the subject's mind) and its contemplation of 'people who are walking deaths'— i.e. this is not a window. Or, to return to Foucault:

Despite appearances, in forming a bird, a flower, or rain, the calligram does not say: These things *are* a dove, a flower, a downpour. As soon as it begins to do so, to speak and convey meaning, the bird has already flown, the rain evaporated. For whoever sees it, the calligram *does not say, cannot yet say*: This is a flower, this is a bird. It is still too much trapped within shape, too much subject to representation by resemblance,



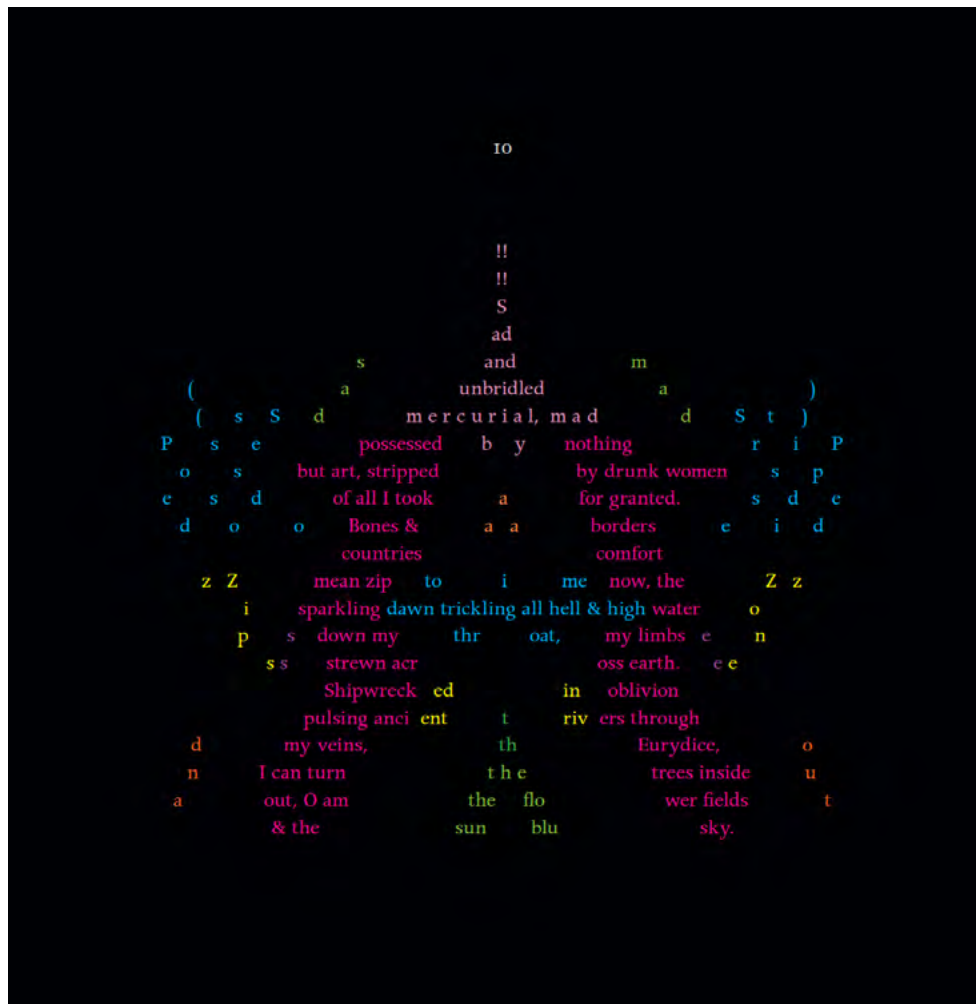
15 e.e. cummings, 'XLV', 1925 (image public domain).

to formulate such a proposition. And when we read it, the deciphered sentence ('this is a dove', 'this is a rainstorm') is *not* a bird, is no longer a shower. By ruse or impotence, small matter—the calligram never speaks and represents at the same moment. The very thing that is both seen and read is hushed in the vision, hidden in the reading (Foucault 1982: 24-5).



In *Object Permanence*, I've attempted to create calligrammes that bend, compress, stretch, split, cut, melt, vapourise and redistribute. I always hope to liberate phrases, words and letters from their more traditional verse and poetic structures/strictures, fragmenting the lyric, and always with the aesthetic, existential, technological (digital, online) and psychological aspects of the Anthropocene in mind. I juxtapose figures and seek out *rappports* between each representation, each shape; but overall, I try to write calligrammes that never speak and represent at the same moment, as in Foucault's dove, above, flying off—a dove that is not a dove one can contain.

For example, from ‘Rawshock’ (16), this is not a Rorschach inkblot, nor the retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, ending with Orpheus being dismembered (the sequence of ten poems does not remind us of ‘the link between the subconscious and myth’ (Page 2012)):



16 Part 10 of Fitch, ‘Rawshock’, 2022

‘While we were dreaming’ (17) is not a representation of a kind of collective *unconsciousness*; ‘Oscillations’ (18) is not a cyclone nor a stormy relationship; the shapes of ‘In Fancy’ (19) are not re-versed childish renditions of the five parts of *Enfance* by Arthur Rimbaud, and ‘Villboard’ (20) is not a doomsroll of billboards, nor an inversion of Rimbaud’s *Villes*.¹

Orb (21) is not an orb, nor a representation of the feeling of encompassing debt. ‘PRO ME THE US’ (22) is not a Promethean city, nor an anagrammatic translation of Rimbaud’s *Promontoire*. The ‘Argo Notes’ shapes (23, *eleven in all*) are not amorphous collages of Maggie Nelson’s book *Argonauts*, nor are they expressions of genderfluidity.

‘Mate’s Rates’ (24) is not political spin regarding the coal industry, nor is (25) a strawberry full of needles deriving from a Liberal Party budget speech. And (26) and (27) are not (mis)translations of Baudelaire’s ‘Spleen’ poems, in technicolour for the postdigital age.

WHILE WE WERE DREAMING

A million vehicles came and left the metropolis
Hairs tumbled onto shoulders
A corner shop was held up at gunpoint
A southerly buster swept across the mountains
Sets of keys and lyrics were forgotten
Countless amateur videos were shared, downloaded
Someone's cancer found its own cure:
Eurydice, discovered by a blind musician
Your other half pondered infidelity more than once
My doppelgänger dove from a pier
Marquees were assembled
A hand unfurled
A lily in the sun
Forty thousand fans went silent at full-time
Two strangers made love in a cubicle
Kids drank from goon bags
Held each other's hair back
A bouquet of balloons snuck across the horizon
Massive rocks moved within the earth
Twilight got invaded by stars
We seeped into each other's sleep, tidal

OSCILLATIONS

Attracted to all things electrical, you passed along the way like a weird
 storm then returned, waxing lyrical about your adventures; the glow-
 worms that lit up the tropics like guide-lights on a runway; dinosaurs
 grumbling in their graves; the plethora of cats that scattered when
 you moonlighted as a monsoon. And what about those ant-sized,
 funny-looking apes pointing up, fawning over your tresses (like
 twisters they'd seen on TV)? Magical spices from across the
 way incensed a certain inability to stay put — the pull of
 turquoise oceans, and vermillion clouds yet to unsettle.
 You left me in your wake: cities of electrons leapt from
 state to state, erasing to-do lists; umbrellas lifted off;
 thunderbirds and fossils quivered at your flights of
 fancy dancing on their arrivals boards. I could feel
 a tremor whenever you kissed another, the great
 bite of opposing time zones, but no — the lure
 of a new language, the smell of grass, dirt and
 rain, foraging for alchemy or hang-gliding w/
 juvy dragons — you came to pine for a less
 personal kind of love, an ascetic on snow-
 caps where landslides of quartz fell deep
 through deserted lakes. After a disserta-
 tion from a nomad who'd hobnobbed
 with the gods, you split the atom with
 a lightning rod looted from Olympic
 towers — rainbows and whirlpools
 erupted in the sky! It was a fitting
 salute. Now here you are on my
 doorstep, my old dog Cerberus
 humping your leg, here you are,
 replete with impulse purchases...
 though who'd begrudge you the
 souvenirs: a leviathan in a tea-
 cup, a snow globe of the Sahara,
 various trinkets from the Under-
 world. Love, since you vaporized,
 a cosmic war has given the stars
 the creeps, I lapsed with an old
 flame, the water's been unsea-
 sonably luke — I swim in vol-
 canoes so my flesh can sting
 like it used to. I thought you
 were a myth, that the pictures
 of the back of your head, sent
 from distant photo-booths,
 were some kind of cruel
 joke. What a ruse! Remind
 me never to look your way
 again. Argh, scratch that:
 before you vanish over
 the horizon, can we ar-
 range to bump into each
 other at the equinox,
 the southern cross or
 the northern auroras,
 unrepentant, on the off-
 chance we might earth
 each other once and
 for all? or will you
 pass along the way
 again like a weird
 storm, with a wink
 and a wry smile —
 lightning striking —
 lightning striking
 root through
 stone, the sea
 going down
 with the sun,
 fire falling
 back into
 things
 — the
 planet
 chang-
 ing
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19 (above) Fitch, 'In Fancy', 2022.

20 (below) Fitch, 'Villboard', 2022.



21 Fitch, 'Orb', 2022.



22 Fitch, 'PRO ME THE US', 2022.

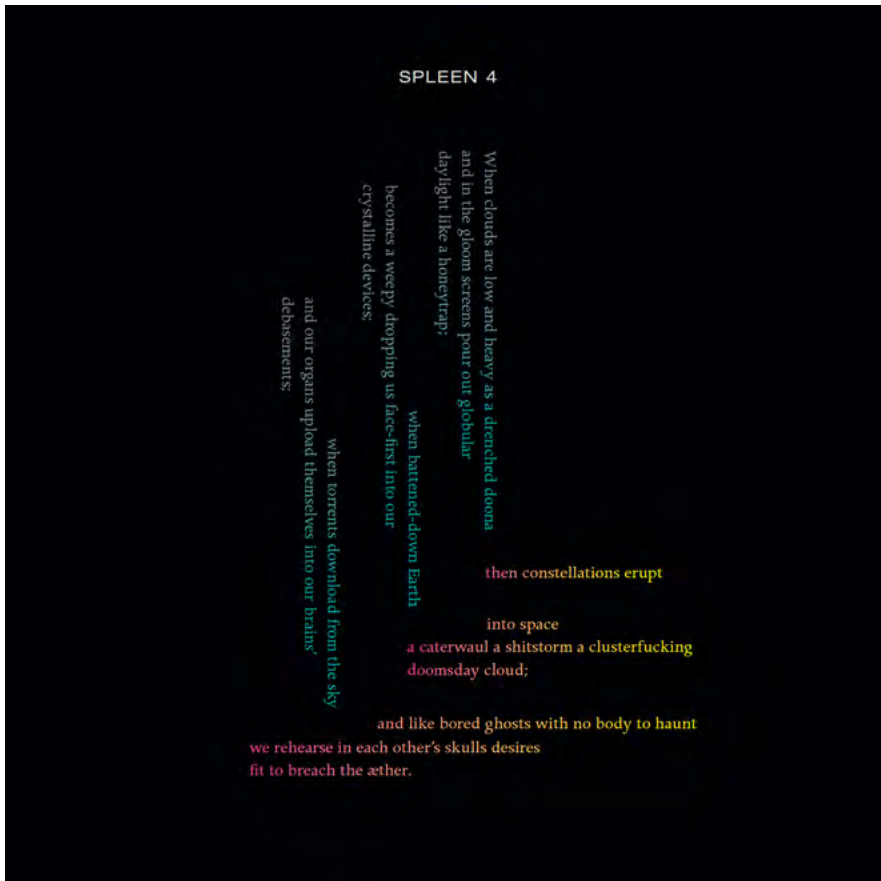


23 Fitch, Parts 4 and 5 of 'Argo Notes', 2022.

But why are these calligrammes in colour and how did I choose to colour them? Initially, a few years ago a UK publisher, Penteract Press, wanted to publish a book of my calligrammes, and they offered full colour A5 production, so I began to create coloured versions of the calligrammes in collaboration with poet, designer and typesetter Chris Edwards. What we produced was the original publication of *Object Permanence: Selected Calligrammes* (2019) at 56 pages, which sold out. This more complete Australian edition, *Object Permanence: Calligrammes*, again typeset and designed in collaboration with Chris Edwards, is published in a square format by Puncher & Wattmann and Thorny Devil Press (December 2022) as part of their Visual Poetics series (#3). It is 92 pages and includes most of the visual poems from each of my full-length poetry collections to date. In terms of choosing colours for the poems, my initial preference was for bright, even fluoro colours, on black backgrounds, in part due to the influence of my young daughters—I wanted something flashy, attention-seeking, something that might excite them. I wanted a digital or internet-y aesthetic as well—when composing the colour versions I often thought of the fluoro-green computer text on black background, perhaps most notably used in *The Matrix* movies. Though there is surely also something romantic going on in my desire for light to emerge from a dark page. In Goethe's *Theory of Colours* (1810), as elsewhere in much Romantic literature, light and dark are oppositional forces; light is pure and darkness is the absence of light. Goethe believed that colours emerged only when light meets dark, and that the colour spectrum is an overlapping of shades of light blended with dark. Perhaps that's where my desire for fluoros to burst forth from darkness comes from. Chris Edwards helped bring some balance or variety to such a gaudy palette with a preference for earthier tones, though he also initiated some of the brighter poems' colour schemes.



26 Fitch, 'Spleen 2', 2022.



26 Fitch, 'Spleen 4', 2022.

The colouring schemes fall into a few categories. One has to do with verisimilitude; for instance, the strawberry (25), the shades of grey for coal in 'Mate's Rates' (24), and the approximation of Hermann Rorschach's original inkblot colours in 'Rawshock' (16). The rainbow colours underlying 'Argo Notes' (23) are more symbolic, in terms of the poem's exploration of gender, though the fact that it's an exploded or shattered rainbow adds meaning too; its various and seemingly random colour patterning allows for reading in numerous directions, if you follow the colours, leading to multiple and changeable constructions of self throughout the sequence. Most other times the colour is expressive of a mood: the slightly acidic greens and yellows of 'Spleen 2' (26); the hot colours of 'Oscillations' (fig. 19); the hectic jumble of technicolour in 'Villboard' (fig. 21), like dozens of villainous billboards or social media ads catching your eye as you doomscroll. And then other times, the colours are more conceptual, originating in lines or ideas of the poem: the bright block colours of 'In Fancy' (19) were devised to suit the child-like block shapes of the poem; the dappled greens of 'Orb' (22) derive from the other meaning of the word 'pines' used in the poem, i.e. not the human cries (although that meaning is there too) but the pine trees and their dappled shade; and I like to think of the toxic colours of the lines beneath the grey towers of 'PRO ME THE US' (22) as nuclear sewers, toxic translations of the monochrome anagrammatic translations that tower above them.

There are other notions in Goethe's *Theory of Colours* that might apply to the colouring of my poems (theory comes in part from the Greek verb *theorein*, which means to look at, or see). For Goethe, colours reveal the whole of nature to our sense of sight and therefore symbolise in themselves the working of the universe. Here is where I'm less interested in Goethe's allegorical meaning and more so in how he views symbolic meaning. Abigail Fisher writes, quoting Goethe, that,

Like the *Urpflanze*, Goethe's beloved conception of the originary, protean form of a plant from which all other plants have evolved, colours 'reveal in microcosmic form the nature of the macrocosm' (Fisher 2022: 49).

So, along with the calligramme's 'double cipher', its urge to reflect, represent and reproduce the primary modes of human perception—sight and sound—the colouring of a calligramme can reveal macrocosms in microcosmic form. Or in Goethe's words:

915.

... every colour produces a distinct impression on the mind, and thus addresses at once the eye and feelings. Hence it follows that colour may be employed for certain moral and aesthetic ends.

916.

Such an application, coinciding entirely with nature, might be called symbolical, since the colour would be employed in conformity with its effect, and would at once express its meaning (Goethe 1970: 350).

It is, of course, impossible to reach immediate and universal symbolic truth in a poem, but the colouring of a calligramme allows for further layers of symbolic meaning to accrue, and a further doubling up—or union—of concept, letter, text, shape, image, meaning.

Finally, to the title *Object Permanence*: the psychoanalytic term 'object permanence' describes a child's ability to know that objects continue to exist even when they can no longer be seen or heard. When an object is hidden from sight, infants often become upset that the item has

vanished. In theory, this is because they are too young to understand that the object continues to exist even though it can't be seen. In the sensorimotor stage of development, from birth to age two, Jean Piaget suggests that children understand the world through their motor abilities such as touch, vision, taste and movement. In order to understand that objects continue to exist even when they are unseen, infants have to develop a mental representation of the object. Piaget called these mental images schemas. During early infancy, babies are extremely egocentric. They have no concept that the world exists separate from their point of view and experience. And I could say that that's a bit like the poet, egocentric at the conception stage of a poem, and that writing the poem is a form of cognitive development in which the poet de-centers themselves from the poem—I could—but I'm more interested in appropriating the metaphor in another way: i.e. that any poem is the intangible made sayable, or the unsayable made tangible. And in the case of calligrammes the intangible is rendered sayable, while the sense of them, the feeling in the dark of them, is made visceral. Because, while all poems can be argued to be objects, calligrammes are far more tangibly and viscerably *made* objects (remembering that *poiesis* means 'to make'). And it's this power—found in the ambiguity of their shapes, the sense of the unsayable rendered tangible via a schema of mental images—that I'm interested in conjuring and making visceral in my poems. To add to my appropriation of Piaget's object permanence, poems can produce a child-like wonder (Arthur Rimbaud once said that 'Genius is the recovery of childhood at will', which suggests an ability to conjure mental images into a schema), and it's this sense of a child-like imagination catching fire—on objects that aren't there—that I try to capture in the shaping, in the making, of my pattern poems. In other words, and again, this is not a pipe: the image of a text, the text of an image, the calligramme—all this is not a pipe.

Notes

¹ On his unfinished work *Hérodias*, in a letter to Henri Cazalis (30 October 1864); *Oeuvres Complètes* (1945) edited by Mondor and Jean-Aubry, 307, as translated in Mallarmé: The Poet and his Circle ([1999] 2005) by Rosemary Lloyd, 48.

² Guillaume Apollinaire, Paris-Midi, 12 July 1914; in Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry*, 47–8.

³ If not otherwise stated, all images of Apollinaire's poems are reproduced from *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War 1913–1916* (trans A H Greet), 1980.

⁴ For my original analysis of this poem, see Toby Fitch, 'Themparks: Farrell Translating Ashbery Translating Rimbaud', *Journal of Poetics Research*, 2017; and Toby Fitch, 'Themparks: Alternative Play in Contemporary Australian Poetry', PhD thesis at the University of Sydney, 2016.

⁵ Apollinaire, 'Simultanisme-Librettisme', in Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry*, 65–6.

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About the author

Toby Fitch is poetry editor of *Overland* and a lecturer in creative writing at the University of Sydney. He is the author of eight books of poetry, including *Where Only the Sky had Hung Before* (Vagabond Press 2019), *Sydney Spleen* (Giramondo Publishing, 2021), and, most recently, a newly expanded and full-colour edition of *Object Permanence: Calligrammes* (Puncher & Wattmann and Thorny Devil Press, December 2022).

TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-THREE POSTCARDS IN REAL COLOUR

Postcards for Perec

Linda Parr

Abstract

Georges Perec's postcards were first published in the French magazine *Le FOU parle*, in 1978. They were not postcards at all, just the written messages, and far from their description 'en Couleurs Véritables' (in Real Colour), they were entirely in black and white. The *Postcards for Perec* mail art project responded to Perec's 243 imaginary postcard messages by creating the missing images as real postcards.

TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-THREE POSTCARDS IN REAL COLOUR: POSTCARDS FOR PEREC

Linda Parr



1 **We're camping near Ajaccio. Lovely weather. We eat well. I've got sunburnt. Fondest love.**

Napoleon on his fiery steed rising from the sea to the beach in Corsica reminds us of Perec's French nationality. His Polish Jewish parents emigrated to Paris in the 1920s.



2 On holiday in Ulster. Very beautiful beaches. The Irish are wonderful. Reckon to be in Strasbourg on the 4th.

The Ulster beach with multiple misplaced 'e's references Perec's 1969 book La Disparition (the disappearance). It is an entertaining novel length lipogram of 300 pages written without using the letter 'e', the most common letter in both French and English. It was translated into English by Gilbert Adair in 1994 with the title A Void – the translation was also achieved without the letter 'e'. Perec became an orphan in 1943, his father had died fighting for France and his mother disappeared into Auschwitz. Without 'e' there can be no mother nor father, nor even Georges Perec.



3 We're at the Hôtel Underwald. Weather good. We eat well. I've been on some outings. Back on Sunday week.

There were 243 messages, which is $3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3 = 3^5 = 243$. Each message was composed of five phrases. Perec made long lists of places and hotel names, using all the letters of the alphabet equally. The less common letters provided a chance to remember for instance Underwald, an historic Swiss canton. Perec also listed entertainments, weather, relaxations, food, and a salutation or thoughts of returning home, before mathematically shuffling and combining the phrases.



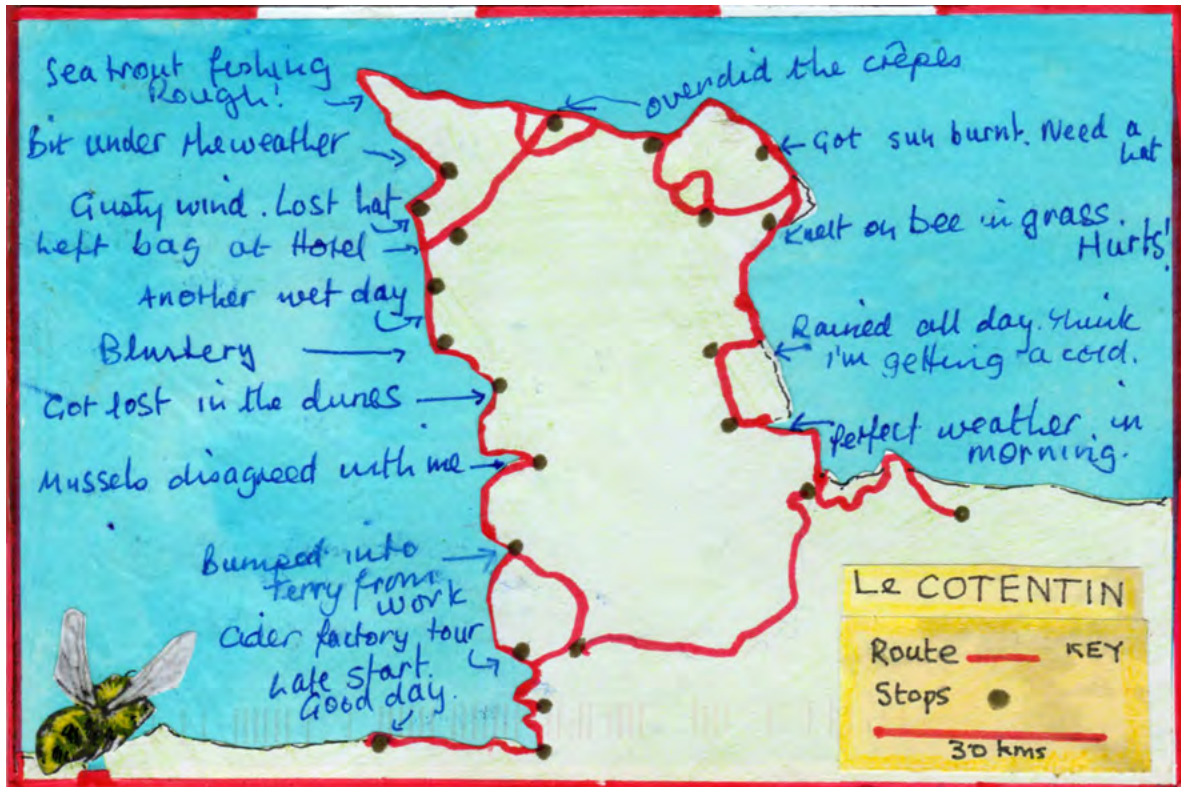
4 We're touring round Malta. Lovely weather. We share our meals with some very correct English people. Back around the 10th.

Tatiana Bonch-Osmolovskaya gave a paper, Combinatorial Greetings from Georges Perec (archive.bridgesmathart.org/2018/bridges2018-253.pdf), which explains the complicated composition of the Perec's messages, with the rules that he strictly kept, until he broke them. Perec argued that one did not have to explain the mechanisms for the construction of writing made by constraint. He likened it to not having to leave the scaffolding up once the house was built. However, all his lists and notes were left behind for scrutiny in his studio.



5 We're crossing Sardinia. Getting a tan all over. Sunburn! Pasta prima! Expect to be back Wednesday next.

A combinatorial visual response, a photographic still-life picking out the phrases of the message. Getting a tan, sunbathing and sunburn are frequent holiday exploits in many of the postcards. In fact, Percec disliked sunbathing, and he was well-known for avoiding the sun and always wearing a big white shirt on the beach.



6 Travelling through the Cotentin, taking it easy! Gastro- but not eco- nomic stops. We've bumped into quite a few friends. Plan to return on the 16th.

Perec's messages describe hedonistic vacations of happy holidaymakers, with no hint of the discomforts of travel, nor the bills. There are so many messages that it would take a lifetime to experience them all. This inventive tour around Upper Normandy from Maggie Brown sounds a more realistic adventure.

In this project the postcard messages were allocated to their volunteer artists using Perec's own 'knight's move' grid system, which was one of the methods he used to combine the elements of his messages. It is both mathematically precise and entirely random.



7 The Quentin Durward is a hotel like no other. We sleep like dormice. It's heavenly. I'm becoming healthy again. Love.

When giving each message a location, Perec often dropped in historic or literary references. Neil Crawford reminds us of the Quentin Durward novel by Sir Walter Scott which about a Scottish archer in the court of King Louis XI. It was also the name given in 1907 to a passenger steam locomotive, hence the engine nameplate.



8 We're crossing the Vaucluse. Weather magnificent. Swimming in the Rhône. I go riding. Fond regards.

A typical five-phrase postcard message, illustrated with wit. Georges Perec's work encompassed a wide variety of styles and formats, such as novels, novellas, radio plays, screenplays (film and television), librettos, poetry and essays, crosswords and puzzles. He joined OuLiPo in 1967 and became one of their most significant members.



9 We've just done Dahomey. Superb nights. Fantastic swimming. Excursions on camel-back. Will be in Paris on the 15th.

The location given in each message was chosen so that the whole alphabet was used, nine times. Although the alphabet was the primary key, Sarah Figlio Hopes picks up on the reason why Dahomey became infamous; Perceval hides both irony and comment in many of his choices.



10 We're in England. Peaceful and relaxing. We go to the beach. I go riding. Thinking of you.

Postcards were commonly sent home from holidays before the advent of portable telephones. Emojis on a mobile phone can do the job of transmitting essential thoughts, but they seem terse and flat, without nuance, unlike the 243 postcard-sized works of art.



11 We've pitched our camp near Fécamp. Basking on the beach with a whole gang of friends. Thinking of you.

When the project started, we were staying at home, and being with friends seemed a dream, but our work travelled through a Republic of Postcards in a postal post-modernist Grand Tour.



12 We're at the Hôtel Nadir. Sunning ourselves on the beach with all the group. Kind thoughts.

Far from nadir, this image and message can represent the entire project.

Images

- 1 Gin Saunders, Saubion, France. Thingmaker. Collage on card.
- 2 Ken Humphries, Wales, UK. Acquisitions Librarian/Musician/Print based Artist. Digital print on card.
- 3 Ella Skilbeck-Porter, Melbourne, Australia. Poet. Mixed media.
- 4 Tatiana Bonch-Osmolovskaya, Sydney, Australia. Writer, visual artist, educator. Digital print on card.
- 5 Lynn Pilling, Manchester, UK. Artist. Digital photo mounted on card.
- 6 Maggie Brown, Melbourne, Australia. Visual Artist. Ink, pencil, watercolour on card.
- 7 Neil Crawford, London/Somerset, UK. Typographer. Digital print on card.
- 8 Mireille Ribière, London & Suffolk, UK. Author & Book Artist. Digital print on card.
- 9 Sarah Figlio Hopes, Suffolk, UK. Visual Artist. Digital print on card.
- 10 Linda Parr, Wiltshire, UK. Book Artist and project initiator. Digital print on card.
- 11 Judith Archer, Bristol, UK. Book Artist. Digital print on card.
- 12 Robyn Foster, Quandamooka Country, Queensland, Australia. Book and Paper Artist. Collage on card.

Contextual Statement

Georges Perec's postcards were first published in the French magazine *Le FOU parle*, in 1978. They were not postcards at all, just the written messages, and far from their description 'en Couleurs Véritables' (in Real Colour), they were entirely in black and white. The messages were translated into English by John Sturrock, and published in 1997 by Penguin Classics, in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*.

Georges Perec (1936–82) was a significant European writer of the 20th century. He worked as an archivist in a medical research library, and it is no coincidence that his skills for noticing the details of everyday life and for categorising things around him became an integral part of his work. The postcard work was dedicated to Perec's friend Italo Calvino, both men were members of OuLiPo, Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (workshop of potential literature). This group of writers and mathematicians, based in Paris from the 1960s, explored the use of constrained writing techniques.

The idea of the *Postcards for Perec* project was to respond to Perec's 243 imaginary postcard messages by creating the missing images, then sending real postcards. There was an enthusiastic response to the proposal from twenty-two countries, and every 10 x 15cm card has made its own postal journey.

These twelve examples of the postcard messages and their images lead to information about Georges Perec, his life and work.

It is over forty years since Georges Perec's untimely death from lung cancer. His work continues to intrigue and inspire in the fields of poetry, literature, art, architecture and cultural studies,

both within and beyond the Francophone world. In 2002 the French postal system issued a postage stamp in his honour, and on 7th March 2016 he was featured as a Google Doodle to celebrate what would have been his 80th birthday.

We celebrate the challenge and fun of Perec's postcard messages which have come alive in this collaborative mail art project.

Postcards for Perec has been exhibited at

University of the West of England, Bower Ashton Library, Bristol, UK
Winchester School of Art Library, Southampton University, UK
The Street Gallery in Bath Spa University, UK
Bristol Artists' Book Fair at Bower Ashton, UK
Cardiff University Special Collection Library, UK
Festival of Architecture and Design, IPA Campus Florya, Istanbul, Turkey
Collins Memorial Library, Puget Sound University, Washington, USA
University of Essex, Albert Sloman Library, Colchester, UK
Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus
and will be on show in the Atrium Gallery of the Waverley Library, Sydney, Australia
from 27th July to 22nd August 2023.

The catalogue for this project, *Postcards For Perec*, also contains more information about Georges Perec. It has a foreword by Philip Terry, essays by Mireille Ribière and typography by Neil Crawford. 64pp in Real Colour of course, available via postcards.for.perec@gmail.com \$30 + p&p. ISBN 978-1-906501-21-1

Instagram: [@postcards_for_perec](https://www.instagram.com/postcards_for_perec)

Works Cited

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About the author

Linda Parr is an artist living in Wiltshire. Her work is often inspired by literature, she enjoys close reading as an artist and the counterpoint of text and art. Parr has an MA in Multidisciplinary Printmaking from the University of the West of England UK and is co-organiser of collaborative projects including *World Book Night* at CFPR, Bristol. Her work is held in national and international collections.



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Poetry, Sequence, Oulipo

ASSEMBLY LINES

Alex Selenitsch

Downloadable publication

This paper is presented with the images as the author intended, as a sequence of pages.

There is also, at the whim of the issue editor, a separate file which has the imposed pages for a 2-up 8pp booklet.

Print pages 2–5 of the file on A4 (or A3) paper with your settings at Landscape orientation and 'Double-sided with short-edge (left) binding'. Fold the bundle in half, short ends together, and press the spine with something firm (handle of a dinner knife, or back of a wooden spoon) to form an 8-page A5 (or A4) booklet. Bind by stapling, tying or sewing if desired..

ASSEMBLY LINES

Alex Selenitsch

Contextual Statement

During conversation, Phil Day suggests an assembly line ritual that might have been played out in the production of (medieval) hand-written texts: one person rules in the lines and passes the sheet to the next scribe who draws in the verticals. The sheet then goes to the next scribe who does the horizontals, then to another to do the obliques and so on to the colourist or illustrator. It's a modern projection onto an imagined hand-drawn past.

Despite the reverse history, or rather, because of it, *Assembly Lines* takes up this idea and builds up a sequence of increasingly textured pages by adding field after field of elements, ending in a final page which is also a field. The temptation to construct or allow recognizable letters to appear was suppressed in the interests of not only foregrounding the system, but keeping the image away from settling into a text or a picture.

The work was typed through a laptop, using a Microsoft Word 97–2004 program. This and similar word-processing programs are easy platforms for a save-duplication-alteration sequence of pages. The signs chosen for this sequence are non-letters, some are possibly fragments of letters, but they also include the underline and strike through functions. These latter two don't appear on the title page. Colour is used to identify each addition and the final page goes back to black and white. All additions were put in intuitively to make the eye scan the whole page.

While there is little, if any, semantic value to the individual signs, the *Assembly* provides for interpretation and speculation. Over a simple rhythm of 1 + 1 + 1 etc, there is an accumulation in which the added always stay in place. The accumulation appears to be in equal increments, and stops when the page is complete. One thinks of the assembly line in mass production and its icon the car, but also the early music of Steve Reich, or the wall drawings of Sol Lewitt particularly while they are being performed or drawn. Unlike the car, whose parts are quite various and derived from their outcome (the car), *Assembly Lines* is an accumulation of similar elements, not completely controlled by the end image.

Composition through a pre-conceived rule or procedure is common in my work. The best works aim for a clarity of procedure in the work itself, unlike serial music or many Oulipo texts where the rule is hidden or imperceptible in the final work. The best works also aim for a final outcome which is surprising and not predictable from the rule being used. Thus, there are two ways of looking at *Assembly Lines*. There is the page-by-page coloured densification of the texture in which duration is the key experience and there is the final image in black and white in which the viewer is immersed in the space of a single page.

About the author

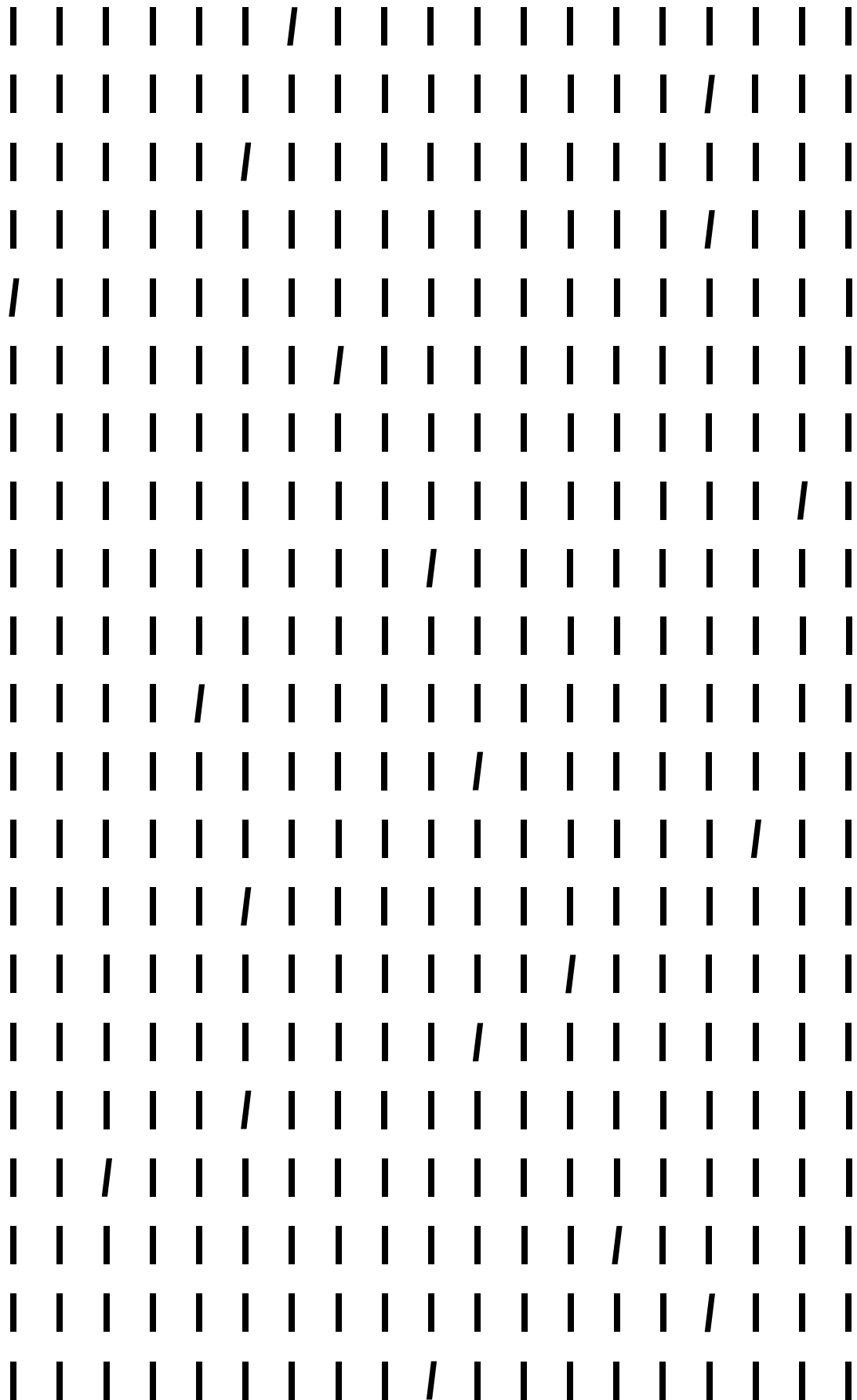
Alex Selenitsch is a Melbourne-based poet and architect, who works across many disciplines including literature, graphics, sculpture and architecture. His most recent solo exhibition was *The Language Factory* at the Melbourne School of Design, the University of Melbourne, installed during the 2021 lockdown.

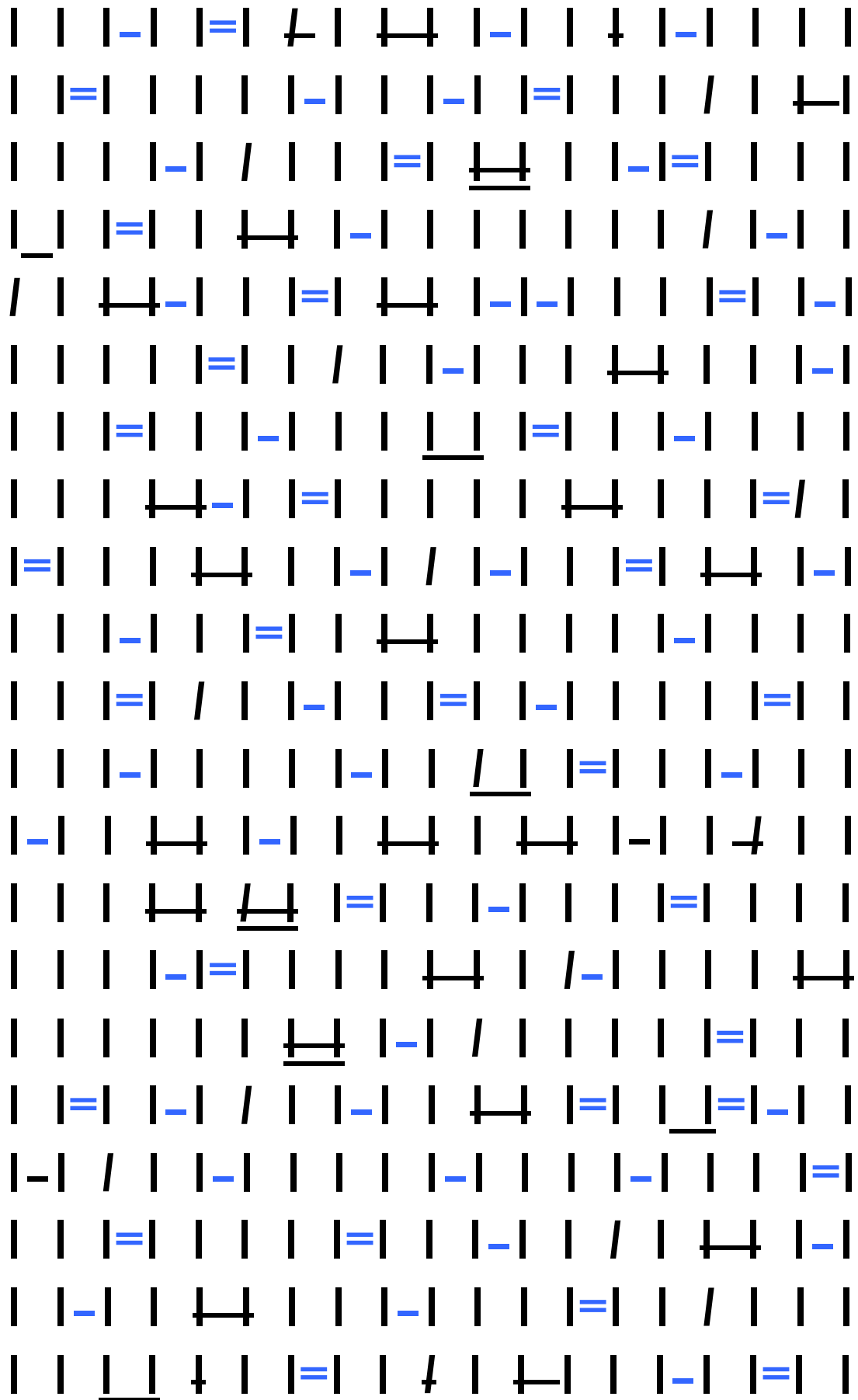
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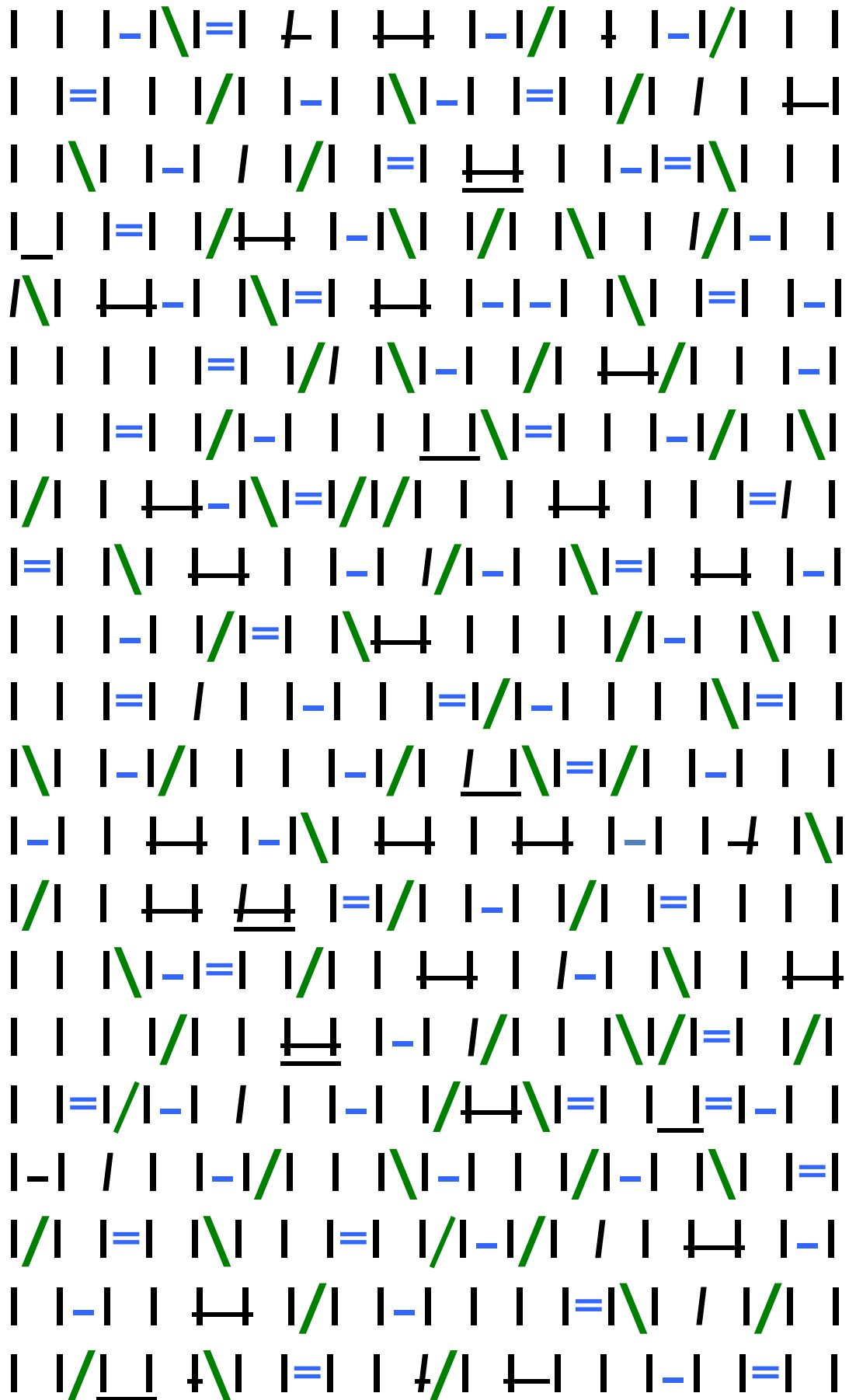
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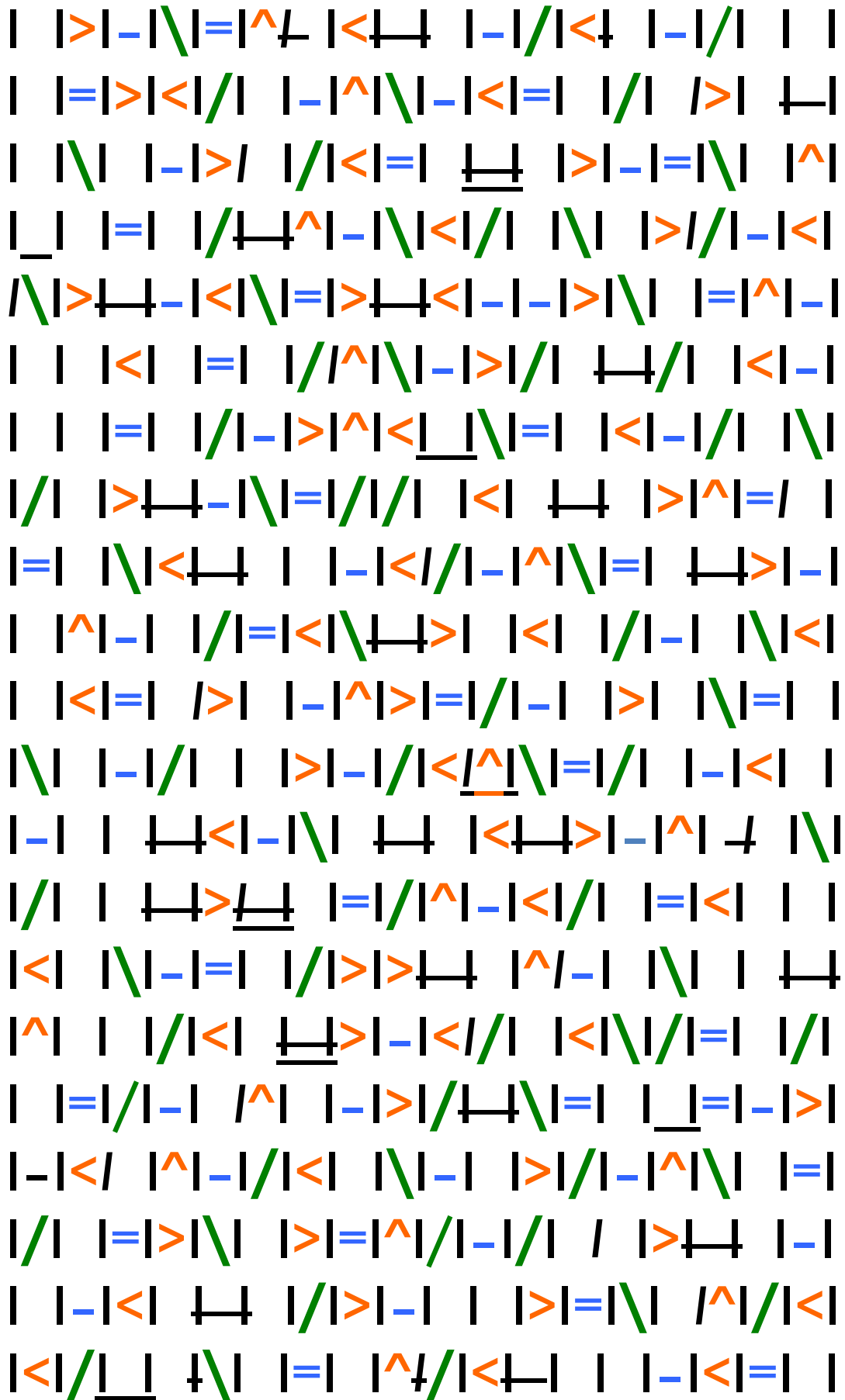
Alex Selenitsch

Melbourne 2020









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Productive Collisions

I THINK THINGS ARE PRECIOUS

Vahri McKenzie

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I THINK THINGS ARE PRECIOUS

Vahri McKenzie

Mrs Tonkin did not love children and taught the year 6 class. She wore her hair in a bun: it was hard to tell how long it was. Once I asked her how long it was, but this was a rude question. I ascertained as much by the way she looked at me for an answer. 'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. That was a rude remark, according to Alice, so I suppose Mrs Tonkin was about a hundred years old.

I think things are precious
I think things are precious
I think things are precious
I think things are precious
I think things are precious
I think things are precious

Mrs Tonkin did not love children and preferred the mode of teaching that involved children copying down long passages from the chalkboard in silence. We did The Digestive System, twice, with no pictures.

Mouth. I think things are precious
Esophagus. I think things are precious
Stomach. I think things are precious
Liver. I think things are precious
Small intestine. I think things are precious
Large intestine. I think things are precious

There were also projects; projects were unstructured. Mrs Tonkin gave us a topic like Transportation or Peoples of the World and left us to it. There was a price to be paid for the relative freedom – freedom from instruction, from preparing and delivering lessons – of projects. Our errors were pointed out in front of the class, after they were made, to teach us not to make them again. Now days this is considered an ineffective teaching strategy; in those days it was just called school. It is *meaningless* to place inverted commas around 'Trains' in a project title. Do *not* take a new page for a new topic. My project 'The People of the Kalahari', in which I had taken a new page for each new topic, had very little written under Shelters. The Shelters page with very little written under it was held up and shown around the class as an obviously stupid choice.

I think things are precious
I think things are precious
I think things are precious
Precious, I think, are things
I think things are precious
I think things are precious

Mrs Tonkin had a cat called Phoebe. I think Phoebe was her only family, but she did not talk about Phoebe all the time. We learned about Phoebe because Mrs Tonkin told us that when she took Phoebe to the vet the receptionist spelled it with an F. I did not want to be spoken about like Mrs Tonkin spoke of the receptionist at the vet, so I learned that Phoebe began with 'Ph' and ended with a long 'e' like Penelope and Chloe.

I think things are precious
 I think things are precious
 Are things precious? I think
 Are things precious? think I
 Are things, I, precious? Think!
 Ahh! Think precious things!

Mrs Tonkin was not a good teacher and bold boys got back at her with daring displays of behind-your-back crudeness that some found funny and I found interesting, like going to the zoo. While Mrs Tonkin laboured at the board, Adrian rushed up, moved his tongue around in a way I knew was a particularly bad sort of rude and got back to his seat without being spotted.

I think things are precious
 Think things precious, I are. (I *do*!)
 Precious things, I are thinking. (I *am* thinking!)
 Precious I are, think things. (I *am* precious, and I think things)
 Things precious, I are thinking. (No – I *think* things precious)
 I think things *are* precious

Sometimes I wanted to be in the zoo, but it seemed impossible to please both my peers and my elders. Once a young teacher-in-training took us for Australian History and we got to write poems. I wrote about bushrangers and used a phrase I'd heard the boys use. I did not really know what it meant; my syntax was convincing. It turned out that to 'do a reymo' was a slur against a local boy with a disability. Miss Petchey explained this quietly and gave me a B.

I think things are precious
 I think, are things precious?
 Are things precious? think I
 Think things, are I precious? *Am* I precious! (Well am I?)
 I think things, are precious. (I *am* precious!)
 Children are precious things, I think

The school encouraged fairness so no child could receive more than one award at the end of the year. This was difficult for Chelsea, who was both very clever and talented at music. It was harder for Mrs Tonkin, who had to decide how to distribute the awards. She called Chelsea up to the front of the room for a quiet word that I could hear clearly from the front row. 'Which will it be: Dux or Music?' Mrs Tonkin asked her.

I think things are precious
 I think things are precious
 Children are precious things, think I
 Precious are children. I think things
 I think things are precious
 Children are precious. I think things

Chelsea looked up and caught me looking at her intently. We were friends but sometimes we were mean to each other, to find out what it was like. If she said 'Music' that would mean I missed out on the one award I was in the running for. If she said Dux that would mean Adrian missed out because he was second cleverest. 'Dux,' Chelsea said, and my cheeks went red. Music Award!

I think things are precious
 Things are precious! think I
 Things I think are precious:
 Things precious are lovely, think I
 Things I think precious are:
 Things precious are wonderful, I think

I was not popular in my class. In year 5 Chris had asked me out and I laughed and ran away because he'd said, 'Will you go out with me to Peppi's?', indicating that he didn't understand that going out did not actually involve going out. In year 6 Chris was going out with Alana, who was popular, and I had missed my chance. Ross Kitts said, 'I *would* consider going out with you if you were a bit more... you know.'

I think things are precious
 Think! Are things precious, I wonder?
 Think things are precious, I. I do!
 I do think things are precious
 I think things are precious
 Think: precious are things I loved

I loved projects. One afternoon I visited the library and consulted the *World Book* and thought I might have enough material for sections on Language, Family Structure, Hunting, Leisure Activities, Food and Water, and Shelters. Other kids took advantage and did not use their time productively. Mrs Tonkin was not pleased, and near the end of the day she got really angry. Some bits of her hair came loose (it did not seem that long). The soft bit on the underside of her upper arms wobbled with abandon. This would surely lead to some cruel mockery later on; for now, the rude boys were still and silent. I sat in the front row and set an example. Yet she stood right in front of me and yelled at us all: 'You've done precious little all afternoon!'

I think things are precious
 I think things are precious? Ha!
 I think: precious are things. I think pressures are things
 I, ahh, think things precious. I think precious things
 These, I think, are precious things
 I think things precious are rare

I had worked so hard! I turned to my neighbour and whispered, 'Well, at least it's *precious!*' This was how I felt about my work. I had done some very nice sketches for my 'People of the Kalahari' cover page. I had started writing it up. I would take a new page for each topic! Mrs Tonkin heard me whisper. She demanded to know what I'd said, and I confessed.

I think things are precious
 Precious, think I, are things
 Precious, think I, things are
 Precious things are dappled, I think
 Precious are the dappled things, think I
 I think things are precious

The Queen was in a furious passion and went stamping about and shouting, 'Off with his head!' or 'Off with her head!' Or was she more like the Duchess who boxed the Queen's ears, shouting,

'You don't know much, and that's a fact.' In a voice of thunder Mrs Tonkin shouted at Alice, 'You will go home and write out "I think things are precious" *one hundred times!*'

I think things are precious
 Think I: things are precious
 Think I, are things precious?
 Think I: precious are dappled things
 Think I, are precious things...
 Think I, precious things are... things precious are rare

What did it mean? Writing lines was a punishment that was not meant to teach you to hate writing. It was meant to teach you to do or not do what you wrote over and over and over. Was I *meant* to think things precious? Or did Mrs Tonkin perhaps mean to assign 'I will not think things precious'? When I told my mum and dad about what I had to do they thought it a ridiculous waste of time that should be spent doing chores or practising the piano. I did my chores without being nagged and practised the piano with great vigour until teatime. I did not write out 'I think things are precious' even once.

I think things are precious
 Things are, I think, precious
 Things are precious, I think. Everything's precious, I think
 Things I are thinking precious:
 Nothing's precious, I think
 I think, Precious, things are going to get better

I did not think much about the lines until the next day. These were my precious things: shells collected from Kalbarri. Purple fringed lilies that flowered all summer. My wooden box containing smaller boxes within which were tiny precious things like shrinkies collected from the cereal box. *Alice in Wonderland*. My mum and dad thought it was a waste of time to write 'I think things are precious'. I do not know if they thought all line-writing punishments were a waste of time or just this one, as I had never been punished in this way before. When Mrs Tonkin demanded to see my lines, I started to cry. 'Why didn't you just do it?' she asked, not unkindly.

I think things are precious
 I think precious things are lovely
 I think, Precious, things *are*
 I, Precious, are thinking things
 I, Precious, are things thinking
 Precious, I think things are going to get better

There are 120 permutations of the phrase 'I think things are precious', which you calculate by multiplying five by four by three by two by one, as I would learn in high school.

I think things are precious
 Precious are things, I think
 Precious things are, I think
 Precious are thick things, aye.
 Precious things I think are comforting
 I, Precious, think things are going to get better

Contextual statement

'I think things are precious' is a work of expanded short fiction that tells a story about a kid set the task of writing one hundred lines as a punishment. While a narrative drives the story, the topic of line-writing structures the story and invites consideration of the issue's question, 'How are contemporary writers being visual?'

'I think things are precious' responds to Emmett Williams's 'Cellar Song for Five Voices' (c. 1960) from *An Anthology of Chance Operations* (1963), an artists' book designed and edited by artists who went on to form Fluxus. Just as this period saw the productive cross-pollination of arts practices, reproduction in print had a 'provocative leveling effect': *An Anthology* became a key site for 'textual indeterminacy and interpenetration – one which structurally replicates, in printed form, the productive collisions between dance, music, sculpture, poetry, lecture' that were emerging at the time (Kotz 2001: 60).

'Cellar Song' uses permutation, the mathematical theory and practice of changing the linear order of a set of items. Once you understand how the work is made, its meaning is conveyed visually and musically, as you notice the patterns of words and spaces between them rhythmically changing.

'Cellar Song' provided a model for my long-overdue hundred lines in 'I think things are precious'. By giving them a visual weight different from that of the frame narrative, readers can engage with line variations as images, so the story hovers between narrative and visual modes of expression and interpretation. 'I think things are precious' also relates to my scholarly and practice-led research with 'scores', a generously ambiguous term that may refer to a self-contained linguistic thing, as well as a thing conveying instructions for physical, verbal or musical actions to be reinterpreted. 'I think things are precious' was performed as part of **Outcome Unknown's Exploratory Music Concerts series** (#52, 2020).

Works cited

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Outcome Unknown <https://www.outcomeunknown.org/> (accessed 11 June 2023).

Williams, E c.1960 'Cellar Song for Five Voices', Museum of Modern Art <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/127614> (accessed 11 June 2023).

Young, La Monte; Mac Low, Jackson; et al. 1963 'An Anthology of Chance Operations' https://monoskop.org/images/0/06/Young_La_Monte_Mac_Law_Jackson_eds_An_Anthology_of_Chance_Operations.pdf (accessed 11 June 2023).

About the author

Vahri McKenzie's artistic work develops concepts for participation and collaboration in creative work as models of, and practice for, ways of being together in a complex world. Vahri is Senior Lecturer and Course Coordinator, Arts and Cultural Management, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University, where her scholarship investigates methodologies that position artistic contributions as new knowledge.



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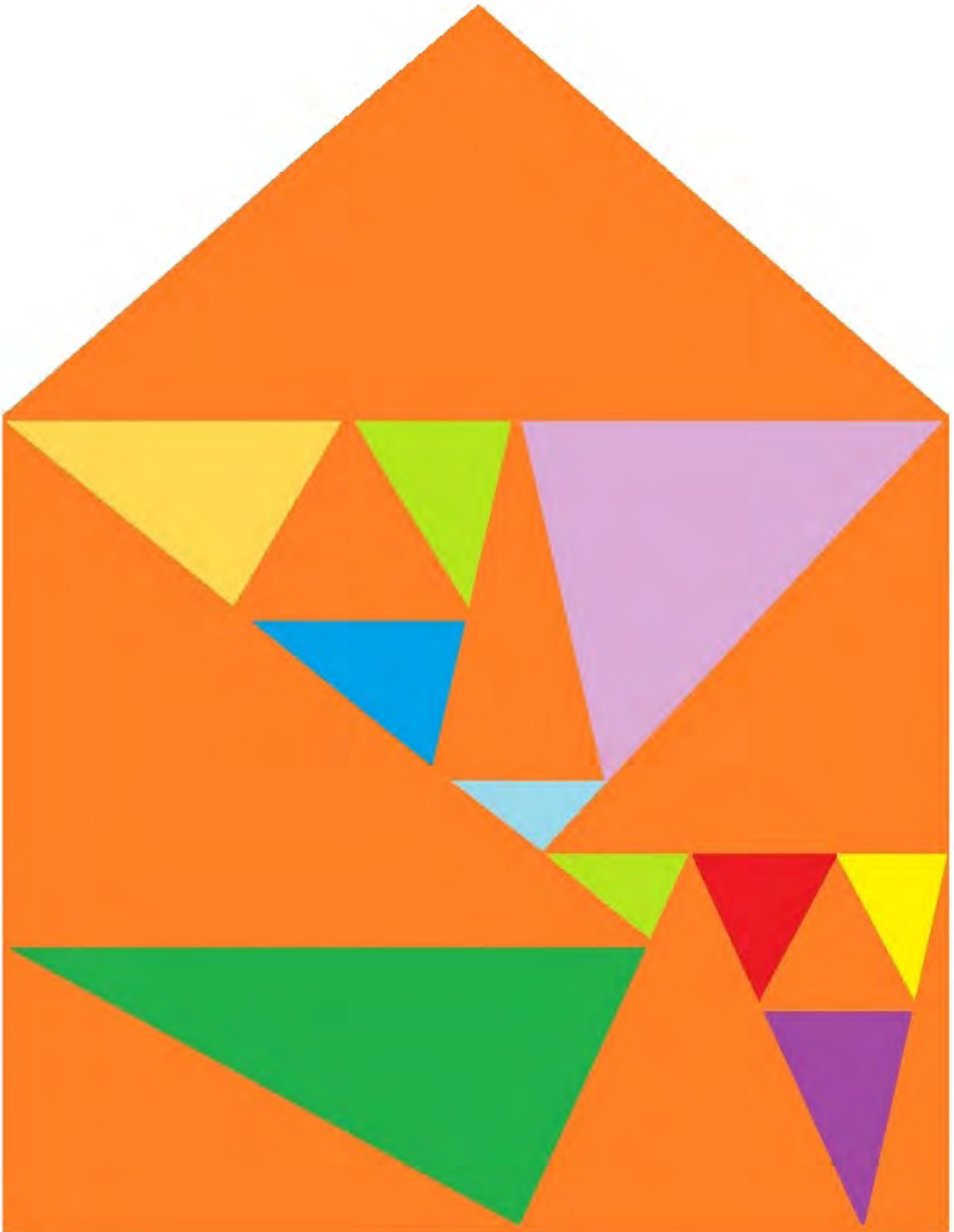
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Arts in Education, Ekphrasis, Creative
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ENCLOSED

K Roberts

ENCLOSED

K Roberts



Contextual Statement

As a writer who trained as a visual artist, I sometimes find it helpful to approach inchoate ideas by drawing, and then describe the picture afterwards. 'Enclosed' began with observations about visual analogies. Young children drawing a tract-style house often choose a five-sided geometric shape that resembles the envelope for a written letter. In literature, the human body has been compared to a container for emotions. My design features variegated triangles that can be imagined as rooms or inhabitants in a home, or the words in a text. These positive areas divide the orange background so that the negative spaces are implied triangles also. While working, I reflected on past experiences with tangram games and figure-and-ground exercises.

'Enclosed' was created in June 2020 during government-mandated quarantines when businesses and public buildings were locked down to counteract the COVID-19 virus. I was experiencing strong feelings of discomfort and physical containment, and I associated the triangles in the design particularly with pennant flags, with a constant restless internal motion, and with the movements of family members in a shared household. Using the image auto-ekphrastically, I wrote 'Covid House,' a poem published in February, 2021 by *Detour Ahead* anthology, edited by Corbin Lewars (below).

Today I find the image continues to satisfy me as a reflection of creative processes. When an artist is in the exploration stages their selected materials, whether physical or mental, interact with each other and evoke various kinds of tensions, shifting their positions until a natural balance is found within an externally imposed structure.

'Enclosed' is a digital image created solely with the bitmap software program Microsoft Paint, and there were no preliminary drawings.

Covid House

We wave hello
from opposite corners
pinned here
like laundry on a line.

Sealed inside a thin
envelope, sharing
one bubble of air
we separate dishes –
yours, mine
shelves flagged in the freezer
as if keeping kosher.

No Glinda of Oz
arrives to release us
from endlessly spinning
dreams of tornadoes,
cytokine storms.

Note

For further reading:

Barton, G 2015 'Arts-based educational research in the early years', in *International Research in Early Childhood Education* 6.1: 62 ISSN 1838-0689.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1150970.pdf>

About the author

K Roberts is a professional non-fiction writer, a published artist, and a first reader in fiction for the Canadian magazine *Nunum*. Recent creative work has been featured in *Otoliths*, *Decolonial Passage*, *Pensive: A Global Journal of Spirituality and the Arts*, and in anthologies from Vita Brevis Press.



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Art, Painting, Painted Text, Fragments,
Found Text

CLIMBING BACK UP YOUR OWN SILK STRING

Lizz Murphy

Downloadable publication instructions

There is a separate file for this author which has the imposed pages for a 2-up 16pp booklet.

Print the pages of this file back to back on A4 (or A3) paper using a printer or photocopier. The file is Landscape orientation, and should flip at the short edge. Once printed, fold the bundle in half, short ends together, and press the spine with something firm (handle of a dinner knife, or back of a wooden spoon) to form an A5 (or A4) booklet. Bind by stapling, tying or sewing if desired.

CLIMBING BACK UP YOUR OWN SILK STRING

Lizz Murphy

It all started with my playbook titled *Typewriter: Used by a newspaper's office*. You might say *Typewriter: Used by a newspaper's office* is a found object — I found it on a half-price table in the local chemist. I was delighted when I opened the package fully and discovered that the old-fashioned typewriter 'plaque' was actually the cover of a brown paper journal. You have to love brown paper.

There are a hundred pages, now all with art & text collage and found text poems — random phrases and images torn or cut from various publications. Really, they are all prompts and props. I used to do all sorts of spontaneous manoeuvres head-to-pen/keyboard, but now I need alternative devices to send me manoeuvring. Some pages work better than others, but they almost all contributed to the development of numerous poems in *The Wear of my Face*.

Often a number of pages have been compiled into one poem emphasising the fragmented quality. Try the page with the black kelpie, plus text from an old novel: *and, look-/anxious-//ing out upon the darkness, waited. . .* (1) One word *unworry* is the centrepiece on another page (with kick-ass purple boots and strings of green beads) (2).



1



2



3

The two come together in a painting of a black dog (3), which is actually a white dog passing through black under the handwritten heading *unworry*. Before the painting, these pages were featured in the poem *Cracks (The Wear of my Face, p 51)* which begins: *It's snowing plastic in the Arctic/Microplastics in sea-ice/Microplastics in seabirds.*

This is one of a series of 10 x 10 cm acrylic paintings on canvas that I am currently working on. It is one example of this making, followed by writing, followed by art (painting) & text.

It looks like there'll also be a follow-up series in response to a selection of poems in *The Wear of my Face*. I hope to capture the fractures, fragmentation and juxtapositions of these poems visually — the more surreal the better. Meanwhile the first of a couple of recent paintings (acrylic on canvas, 15 x 15 cm), which lead to this future plan, is an illustration from a random

poem about lovely old thighs. The second, inspired by the poem *His (The Wear of my Face, p 53)* is a fist coming out of night, though it does have the addition of new, found text which reads: *I love you from the sky to the ground!*

Open slather.

There is a power in all of this — and a joy. At times I thought I should (to achieve) or could (to manage) only do one or the other, but bringing visual art and writing together facilitates and unites the two creative practices that I love. It feels natural. Drawing from one or responding to another is connection, is play, is joy.

I mull this over — response, after response, after response. Sit for some minutes allured by a tiny creature climbing back up its own silk string, and think, yeah, it feels a bit like... *that!*



Studio notes

1. Make small art & text works from torn paper/ images and found text in a playbook. Title: *Typewriter used by a newspaper's office* (completed over a period of about four years).
2. Use playbook to generate poems for a manuscript titled *The Wear of my Face* (collection published by Spinifex Press, September 2021).
3. Produce small art & text works inspired by the playbook with found text hand-brushed selectively (series of acrylic on canvas, 10 x 10 cm, in progress).
4. Potential follow-up series of small paintings/ art & text works, exploiting fragmentations and juxtapositions found in poems published in *The Wear of my Face* — ... *a poetry assemblage of fragments from passing lives and landscapes, fractured realities, fractured worlds* (from the book's back cover).

About the artist

Lizz Murphy is a Capital Region poet who writes between Binalong NSW and Canberra ACT, in a variety of styles from prose poetry to micro poetry, often incorporating found text. Lizz has published fourteen books. Her ninth poetry title, *The Wear of My Face* (Spinifex Press 2021) won the ACT Writers' ACT Notable Award for Poetry (Big Press) in 2021. Spinifex Press also published *Two Lips Went Shopping* (2000) and her popular international anthology *Wee Girls: Women Writing from an Irish Perspective* (1996, 2000). Other titles include: *Shebird* and *Six Hundred Dollars* (PressPress), *Walk the Wildly* (Picaro/Ginninderra) and *Stop Your Cryin* (Island). Visual art, her first passion, has returned in recent years in the form of small art & text works. She occasionally participates in group exhibitions including with the Postcards from the Sky collective and recently had a solo exhibition of small works in conjunction with Kate O'Connor. Lizz blogs at [A Poet's Slant](#).

**CLIMBING
BACK UP
YOUR OWN
SILK STRING**



Lizz Murphy

Acknowledgements

I borrowed the term 'playbook' from Canadian poet Anne Carson's superb facsimile publication *H of H Playbook* (New Directions, 2021). It seemed so apt.

The Wear of my Face manuscript project was supported by the ACT Government with thanks. *The Wear of my Face* was published by Spinifex Press, September 2021. Thank you, Susan Hawthorne and Renate Klein. Visit <https://www.spinifexpress.com.au/> for some of the best feminist books ever.

I first talked about my manoeuvres on the *Hybridity & Prose Poetry* panel at *Poetry on the Move: Lyrical Manoeuvres 2022*. Thank you, Director, Kimberly Williams.

Painted text is a practical solution to recycling some of the original found text which is cut or torn then glued into my playbook. It is also a reciprocal response to Binalong artist Kate O'Connor who frequently incorporates handwritten words in her paintings. You can see her dynamic work at <http://kateoconnor.com.au/>

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About Lizz Murphy

Lizz Murphy is a Capital Region poet who writes between Binalong NSW and Canberra ACT, in a variety of styles from prose poetry to micro poetry, often incorporating found text.

Lizz has published fourteen books. Her ninth poetry title *The Wear of My Face* (Spinifex Press, September 2021) won the ACT Writers' ACT Notable Award for Poetry (Big Press) 2021. Spinifex Press also published *Two Lips Went Shopping* (2000) and her popular international anthology *Wee Girls: Women Writing from an Irish Perspective* (1996, 2000). Other titles include: *Shebird* and *Six Hundred Dollars* (PressPress), *Walk the Wildly* (Picaro/Ginninderra) and *Stop Your Cryin* (Island).

Visual art, her first passion, has returned in recent years in the form of small art & text works. She occasionally participates in group exhibitions including with the Postcards from the Sky collective established through Belconnen Arts Centre projects. She had a solo exhibition of small works titled *Piece of Place* in conjunction with Kate O'Connor's *Finding your Way Home* during the Yass Valley Arts Trail (November 2021). Lizz has worked in retail, publishing, regional arts development, poetry development and was once a regional newspaper editor. Lizz sometimes blogs at *A Poet's Slant*: lizzmurphypoet.blogspot.com

Studio notes

1. Make small art & text works from torn paper/images and found text in a playbook. Title: *Typewriter: Used by a newspaper's office* (completed over a period of about four years).
2. Use playbook to generate poems for a manuscript titled *The Wear of my Face*. (collection published by Spinifex Press, September 2021).
3. Produce small art & text works inspired by the playbook with found text hand-brushed selectively (series of acrylic on canvas, 10 x 10 cm, in progress).
4. Potential follow-up series of small paintings/art & text works, exploiting fragmentations and juxtapositions found in poems published in *The Wear of my Face* — ... *a poetry assemblage of fragments from passing lives and landscapes, fractured realities, fractured worlds* (from the book's back cover).

Climbing back up your own silk string

It all started with my playbook titled *Typewriter: Used by a newspaper's office*. You might say *Typewriter: Used by a newspaper's office* is a found object — I found it on a half-price table in the local chemist. I was delighted when I opened the package fully and discovered that the old-fashioned typewriter 'plaque' was actually the cover of a brown paper journal. You have to love brown paper.

There are a hundred pages, now all with art & text collage and found text poems — random phrases and images torn or cut from various publications. Really, they are all prompts and props. I used to do all sorts of spontaneous manoeuvres head-to-pen/keyboard, but now I need alternative devices to send me manoeuvring. Some pages work better than others, but they almost all contributed to the development of numerous poems in *The Wear of my Face* (Spinifex Press, 2021).

Often a number of pages have been compiled into one poem emphasising the fragmented quality. Try the page with the black kelpie, plus text from an old novel:

and, look-/anxious-//ing out upon the darkness, waited ...



One word *unworry* is the centrepiece on another page (with kick-ass purple boots and strings of green beads).





The two come together in a painting of a black dog, which is actually a white dog passing through black under the handwritten heading *unworry*. Before the painting, these pages were featured in the poem *Cracks (The Wear of my Face, p 51)* which begins: *It's snowing plastic in the Arctic/Microplastics in sea-ice/Microplastics in seabirds*

This is one of a series of 10 x 10 cm acrylic paintings on canvas that I am currently working on. It is one example of this making, followed by writing, followed by art (painting) & text.

It looks like there'll also be a follow-up series in response to a selection of poems in *The Wear of my Face*. I hope to capture the fractures, fragmentation and juxtapositions of these poems visually — the more surreal the better. Meanwhile the first of a couple of recent paintings (acrylic on canvas, 15 x 15 cm), which lead to this future plan, is an illustration from a random poem about lovely old thighs. The second, inspired by the poem *His (The Wear of my Face, p 53)* is a fist coming out of night, though it does have the addition of new, found text which reads: *I love you from the sky to the ground!*

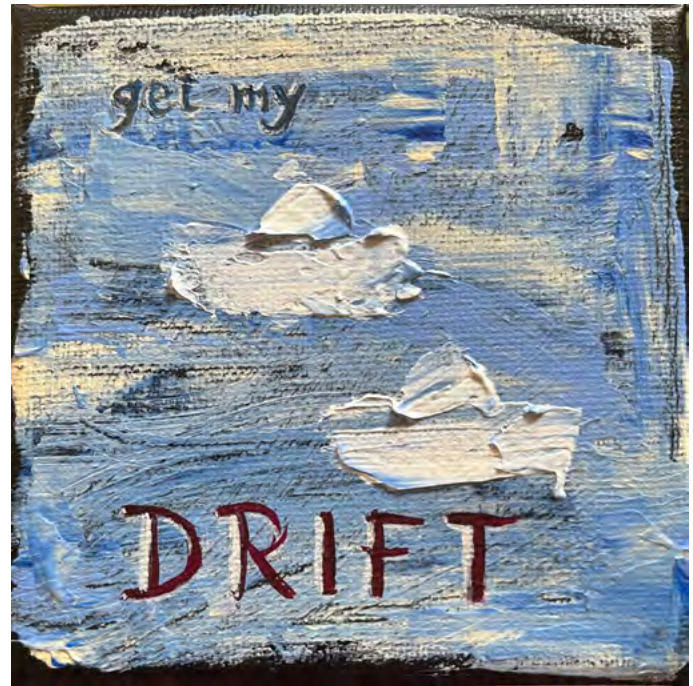
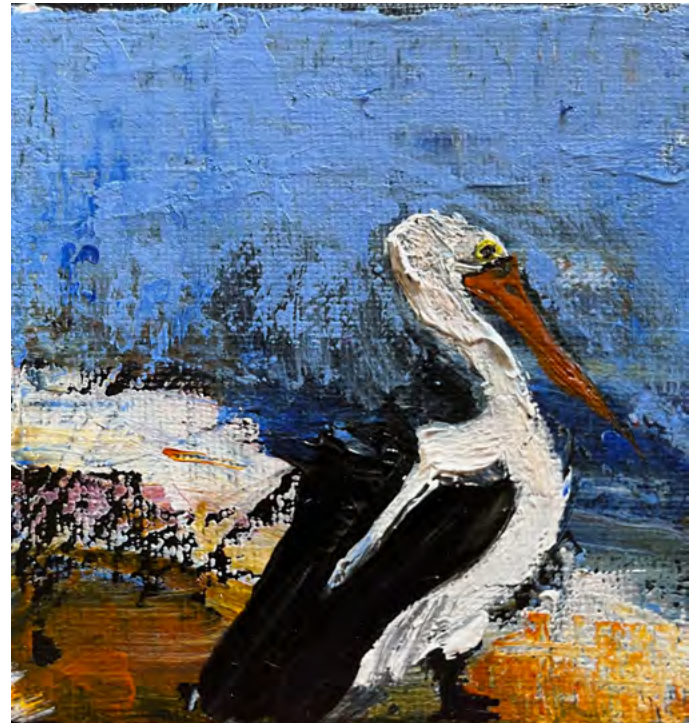
Open slather.

There is a power in all of this — and a joy. At times I thought I should (to achieve) or could (to manage) only do one or the other, but bringing visual art and writing together facilitates and unites the two creative practices that I love. It feels natural. Drawing from one or responding to another is connection, is play, is joy.

I mull this over — response, after response, after response. Sit for some minutes allured by a tiny creature climbing back up its own silk string, and think, yeah, it feels a bit like ...

that!







SOCIAL TEXTILES

Poetry as Protest in the Anthropocene

Astra Papachristodoulou

University of Surrey

Abstract

This paper interrogates the common threads between protest literature and banner sculptural poetry, while it also explores alternative forms that protest banners take and the way that these communicate with ideas surrounding ecological and social justice. Overall, it seeks to theorise and map contemporary sculptural poetics produced by women in the UK and beyond and, in the process, to provide an up-to-date account of this mode, not only from a critical angle but from a creative angle as well. The paper starts with considering poetry in banner form as a prominent element of protest with relevant work by Thalia Campbell and Maggie O'Sullivan, and then considering wearable art by Rachel Fallon as a dynamic and multisensory praxis. These materials and more are blended with relevant secondary literature review and creative responses. The textual banners presented here showcase innovative poetry's potential to destabilise canons, reconfigure, and restitch our social and ecological stratification.

SOCIAL TEXTILES:

Astra Papachristodoulou

I'm interested in what's going on right now, when young people are deciding to make works of art that are participatory, that are connected and that are there, in the moment and with the people in the street.

Cecilia Vicuña

Introduction

September 15th, 1974. Ten thousand people attended a historical protest in London's Trafalgar Square to express solidarity with liberation movements across the world and raise support for democracy in Chile following a profound political crisis.¹ In the thrust of public outcry and protests worldwide, artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña—who was exiled in London after the 1973 coup—co-founded the Artists for Democracy collective alongside David Medalla and John Dugger. As part of this collective, the artists took an active part in the political activities in London during that period (Vicuña, n.d.). To complement the vibrancy in spirit, the protest was clothed in large-scale banners designed by Dugger that hung in variable sizes – they read 'Chile, Vencerá' translated in English into 'Chile, will win' in capital letters and painted in the colours of the Chilean flag (1). The sewn mixed media text and figures, the banner's strip-like cut pattern and multiple fabric layers enhance its sculptural dimension. Despite its playful quality, the banner embodies the voice of the people who want the restoration of peace in Chile. In an effort to create a wearable format of the banner, Vicuña knitted a sweater for John Dugger (2), thus transforming a piece of art which is usually produced to be held up high at single rally events into an everyday wearable object that can communicate its message fluidly in different settings and times. Both Dugger's 'Chile, Vencerá' banner and its accompanying sweater by Vicuña exemplify several points that are central to this paper, with a focus on how sculptural poems in banner and wearable form can play an active part in protests of social and ecological justice and resistance through tactility and materiality.

With this approach to protest, materials, and textiles in mind, and building on the idea of sculptural poetry as a political tool against the damaging colonial and consumerist structures that contribute towards social and ecological injustice, this paper will discuss sculptural poetry and text art with a focus on political perspectives and approaches shared by women artists. It will, more specifically, address the following questions: *What are the common threads between protest literature and banner sculptural poetry? What alternative forms do protest banners take, and how do they address ideas surrounding ecological and social justice?* I will investigate these questions by, firstly, looking at poetry in banner form as a prominent element of protest with relevant work by Thalia Campbell, Maggie O'Sullivan, and Rachel Fallon as a dynamic and multisensory praxis whose embodied interaction and engagement allow for a textural exploration of the ecofeminist self. Throughout this paper, I will be presenting examples from my own practice that explicate and demonstrate these aspects. In addition to these examples of work, a variety of protest materials and banner poems will appear throughout to highlight elements of impact and instantaneity but also to question whether protest banners could be considered visual or sculptural poems. These primary materials will be brought into dialogue with theoretical perspectives of authors such as Willard Bohn and Maggie O'Sullivan. The textual banners discussed here showcase visual poetry's potential to destabilise canons, reconfigure, and reconstruct our social and ecological stratification.



1 Tate, *Vicuña with maquette for John Dugger's Chile Vencerá banner*, n.d.



2 Ruiz, *John Dugger wearing sweater by Cecilia Vicuña in 1974*, 2021.

The wider context of this paper is an emerging and growing body of literature that has investigated resistance through the merging of text and textiles to achieve this – relevant work has been recently produced by Rachael Haynes, Tali Weiberg, Moi Tran, Storm Greenwood, Briony Hughes, Cat Chong, and Susie Campbell to name a few. Many of these female and non-binary practitioners contributed to my recent group exhibition *Text-Isles* (Rhodes, 2021), which examined materiality through the lens of text and textiles. These contemporary practitioners are part of a very specialised branch of material poetry which has an extensive history and is currently seeing a resurgence. The dissemination of publications and events that showcase such work include Amanda Earl's *Judith: Women Making Visual Poetry* (2021) anthology and Bean and McCabe's *The New Concrete* (2015), such works shake existing notions of literature that incorporate text and textiles and explain the interest in new poetics. The link between this kind of poetry and resistance is undeniable, as Susie Campbell affirms: 'the many similarities and kinships between text and textile provide fertile ground for the development of a material poetics for a poetry of conflict, violation and harm' (Campbell, 2021: 237). Regarding this sense of rupture which is embedded in textiles and brings new perspectives to light for the reader, Campbell adds: 'tears, rips and fraying [...] are highly suggestive of other kinds of injury and can be staged within a text to bring the reader closer to a sense of material damage' (Campbell, 2021: 237). Ultimately, this paper considers ways in which banner poetry with sculptural qualities, in the context of resistance, provides a nexus for thinking through the scope of linguistic and artistic forms for change.

Banner poetry as protest

In recent times, banners painted in yellows and blues have become prominent visual cues in protests of solidarity for Ukraine across the globe following the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine since February 24th, 2022. The banners often include short messages in uppercase bold font to make the text stand out, national colours and peace symbols to express solidarity; as I explore below, these are some of the common indicators amongst the banners that are able to tell their own stories and can reveal information regarding their creators and their views of the world in a concise and condensed form, often accurately and effectively. The story they tell is often one of despair: banners are ingrained in our memory as remnants of a failed social order fuelled by inequalities and injustice but also remind us that there is hope and scope for change. The minimal text that usually occurs in this form is used in ways to portray an impactful message in a quick glance that is ultimately memorable: this often involves puns, rhyme and relevant illustrations or images and bright font colours. Beyond the various characteristics across protest banner production that make this kind of work distinguishable from other text art, it is often the textual element of these works that add political weight to the material.

Definitions of protest literature shed light on the possibilities that this form encompasses and its transformative impact on society and, particularly, marginalised groups. In the context of literature and language studies, Eric Leuschner states that 'literature has long been an integral part of the protest tradition' (Leuschner, 2019: 27). He adds that 'at its worst, protest literature slides into propaganda; at its best, it changes the world' (Leuschner, 2019: 27), thus pointing to the transformative properties of protest banners and other protest materials that use language as a tool for change. John Stauffer, a leading authority on social protest movements, expands this notion through his broad definition of protest literature that focuses on highlighting 'society's ills':

Protest literature functions as a catalyst, guide, or mirror of social change. It not only critiques some aspect of society but also suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, a solution to society's ills. (Stauffer, 2006: xii)

This idea of protest literature as a catalyst for social change connects this form specifically with marginalised communities that are disproportionately affected by social problems and ecological loss. From a political science perspective, S. Laurel Weldon writes that protests are 'important avenues of political representation, especially for excluded and disadvantaged groups in established democracies' (Weldon, 2011: 1), and goes on to say that social movements enable representation and inclusion and allow 'disadvantaged groups [to] define themselves and identify their priorities' (Weldon, 2011: 2). The transformational power of protest is materialised quite literally in the protest objects themselves that often use graphic terms that may stem from a place of pain, feelings of injustice, loss and mourning to elicit empathy and, subsequently, bring about change. As a form, the creation of protest banners makes literature more accessible to marginalised groups who may use their pain and creative drive (often collectively) in order to produce something impactful.

In addition to the act of revolt that surrounds protest banners and predisposes them as tools for change, the essence of protest banners boils down to a mix of language, matter, action, context, and environment – the constellation or assemblage of interrelated, intra-acting forms and substances. Focussing on the language element of this constellation, Maggie O'Sullivan who, as

a poet has offered a platform for marginalised poetics² including the silenced voices of animals and nature (Armstrong, 2004: 59) and ‘has been persistently concerned with marginalisation and silencing, and with lost or suppressed aspects of language’ (Bloomfield, 2011: 10), believes that the concept of transformation is strongly linked to language. O’Sullivan explains:

Language is essentially transformative. Transformative power, ability, essence is inherent in language, all languages. I think by working with language one can tap into this and use it, by making it more visible, more of an active physical presence in the world. (O’Sullivan in O’Sullivan and Thurston, 2011: 247)

Sharing stories through poetry allows one to extend their message to others in, often, more elegant ways – as a practitioner, I generally feel more confident expressing an idea through poetry rather than through common speech. Poetic language can be transformative for both the messenger and its receiver, with words undergoing a screening, an act of curation on the page. As O’Sullivan explains, language can allow one to have an ‘active physical presence’ in their respective environments. This transformative aspect of language disguises itself in protest banners in bold messages, typographically and metaphorically.

Thalia Campbell, a creator of some of the most iconic protest banners of the late twentieth-century showcasing UK women’s peace activism, exemplifies the idea of protest literature as a tool with transformative potential. Campbell’s large velvet patchwork banner ‘Girls Say No to the Bombs’ (3), which is currently held at The Peace Museum in Bradford, although it uses minimal text, carries with it a convincing gender-focussed message of peace through language, textiles, symbolism and movement. This banner was used during the early days of the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp³ (Campbell, 2008). Linguistically, the banner benefits from a direct three-lined message that does not in itself produce poetic echoes; however, the placement of the words is interesting: the word ‘No’ is placed at the centre, a technique that drives the viewer’s eye directly to the word, thus amplifying the overall rebellious tone of the work.

Visually, the colours and textures that accompany the text add complexity to the composition. Campbell has made the bold yellow text stand out by pairing it with various sewn shapes and figures: from colourful velvet patchwork to handcrafted illustrations of doves. This piece also features dangling charms and dainty bells that add individuality and whimsical undertones to the work. All these vibrant elements that can be associated with femininity and vitality are framed by a khaki velvet border – this detail is of particular significance: the khaki colour of the backdrop has connotations of military clothing and war, which, in itself can be associated with male energy. As R. Brian Ferguson suggests from an anthropological perspective, ‘masculinity is a malleable category but always connected to war—when war is present’ (Ferguson, 2021: 121), thus the contrast between military khaki and vibrant colours (such as pink), which is stereotypically associated with femininity (Koller, 2008) create a metaphorical tension between the binary genders of male and female, but also between the notions of war and peace. It is no coincidence that the piece was exhibited in a gendered-focussed peace camp that placed women, a minority group in terms of their limitations in society,⁴ against nuclear weapons.

In the process of developing creative outputs in response to the critical findings in this paper, I considered what poet Nisha Ramayya suggests in the context feminist poetics:



3 Campbell, *Girls Say No to the Bombs*, 2008.

Emphasising the practice of poetics requires acknowledging one's environment and assuming a position; being aware of oneself and others, and making connections; devising and applying methods, and moving towards oneself and others.

(Ramayya, 2015: 21)

This statement emphasises that prior to producing poetry, a realisation has to take place: an understanding of one's own positionality, but also one's relationality; the connectedness to oneself and others as a result of this realisation. Reflecting on the complex neo-liberal landscape and worrisome dimensions of coloniality that occupy our current spaces, and the stage in the Anthropocene, I produced a series of banners with sculptural qualities that embody resistance against social and ecological injustice. These span different systems of production, though their approach to language remains the same.

Assuming a position through poetry

My poetic banner 'Banner for bees' (4) demonstrates thematically many of the elements discussed thus far in this paper – similarly to Campbell's banner, the piece's textual and visual properties are in sync. At the verbal level, my banner replicates Campbell's minimal yet compact approach to language to communicate the rapid decline of bees. The banner reads: 'Bees at



4 Papachristodoulou, *Banner for bees*, 2022.

loss no more'. The urgency of the message is enhanced by the negative determiner 'no' and the careful arrangement of the bold letters that alternate symmetrically as the short poem progresses (for instance, the first four-letter word becomes two-lettered in the second line, and back to a four-letter word in the third line and so on) – this placement of the words maximises the visual and kinetic force of the poem while also enhances rhythm in a short space.

In terms of form, 'Banner for bees' has been made with upholstery webbing, woollen felt and charred wood in an effort to use materials whose properties add depth to the composition. Inspired by Joseph Beuys' use of natural materials and the layers of meaning that these produce, I used jute upholstery webbing for the core in an interlocking fashion as, apart from jute fibre being bio-degradable, and thus in line with the banner's

message, this strong closely woven fabric is used as support for the seats of upholstered chairs. This allows the viewer to contemplate the commonalities between a fabric that essentially 'holds a structure together' and bees whose role in the ecosystem is vital. The flow of the closely interwoven pattern interacts with another intersection in the poem: the way the role of bees and their capacities entwine our own prospects and fate with theirs and offers recognition of bees as an integral part of our ecosystem and, indeed, of ourselves. Finally, the banner hangs from a burned piece of wood which forms its handle – as one holds it, the hand turns into a clenched fist which has been a long-standing gesture of unity and resistance and a common symbol of communism, socialism and more recently the Black Lives Matter movement, amongst others (Stout, 2020).

On August 26th, 2022, I took my banner to a London protest. As we laid 'playing dead' with our banners across our bodies outside the tower building of the Shell Centre (5), I considered the significance of this embodied experience: I was overwhelmed by a sense of solidarity but also felt vulnerable as I looked up to a sky obstructed by concrete cladding. The prevailing necrotic silence contrasted the enacted battlefield (which was heavily attended by police) and the cries for resistance that we suppressed at that moment to get our point across – we, the protesters stood against the newly approved gas field in the North Sea, Jackdaw, owned by British multinational oil and gas company, Shell. This shared experience placed the material body in relation to its landscape, physically and metaphorically, thus creating an opportunity for heightened awareness and reflection upon this complex relationship. Within this staged intervention, my 'Banner for bees' fulfilled its purpose.

The simplicity and directedness of the language seen on protest banners can limit the extent to which works in this mode can be perceived as poems and can get in the way of an elaborate textual analysis of such work. So when, then, does a protest banner qualify as a visual poem?



4 Papachristodoulou, *London environmental protest*, 2022.

To answer that, it is useful to follow Willard Bohn's definition of visual poetry, which consists of creations 'meant to be seen – poetry that presupposes a viewer as well as a reader' (Bohn, 2001: 15). Protest banners such as Dugger's 'Chile Vencera' or Campbell's 'Girls Say No to the Bombs' fit such a definition in a broad sense. Based on my definition of a sculptural poem as an object with linguistic and sculptural values tied to the properties and use of materials with, often, interactive strata, the similarities between protest banners and sculptural poems are many, with one significant distinction: that of time.

Driven by the idea of producing a more nuanced banner linguistically with all the common qualities that a protest banner entails (including minimal and bold text as well as found materials), I created the banner titled 'Banner for Maggie O'Sullivan' (6), partly to pay tribute to O'Sullivan's work, and

partly to acknowledge her influence on this particular piece. In contrast to 'Banner for bees' which follows a more simplistic approach to language, this poetic banner, although it follows a similar register in terms of musicality and condensed content, offers a more nuanced approach to language.

In addition to the title which alludes to O'Sullivan whose work, as explained previously, has been persistently concerned with marginalisation and silencing, the approach to language pays homage to the poet in terms of the production of rhythm and the use of short lines, and the musicality and meaning that these tools project: according to Scott Thurston, O'Sullivan's poetry 'strikes the eye and ear first before specific meanings begin to establish themselves' with 'short lines [...] skew[ing] across the page instilling the poem's figure with kinetic energy' (Thurston, 2011: 179). This emphasis on sound and short lines echoes the kinetic energy of the content of my banner poem. Finally, some of the words in the poem (e.g., 'charred and brittly') have been given a distinguished red colour as opposed to the beige of the rest of the text to echo O'Sullivan's frequent use of visual notation – in an interview with Charles Bernstein and Penn students she discussed this approach allows words to have more depth or appear 'incised on the page' and adds that 'the different kind of appearances of words and letters to give some indication of how they can be taken out and expanded' (O'Sullivan in Bernstein, 2007).

Furthermore, the piece adopts the idea of protest banners as a catalyst for change by offering a prediction of our future while tackling the disorder and anguish that such chaos may entail. In this banner, I envision future cities, engulfed by war and further ecological damage, as 'charred and brittly views, clouded across the chest'. The use of adverbs is heavy here (e.g., 'dowly', 'brittly', 'drifty') as means of attempting to describe the future based on the current disorder: a prophecy of the future in the scenario that the state of the world worsens. The anxiety that is tied to our current ideas of the future is expressed through the lines 'dowly air flocking low [...]



6 Papachristodoulou, *Banner for Maggie O'Sullivan*, 2022.



7 O'Sullivan, *Talisman to Vitalise the Heart*, 1988.

clouted across the chest and coiled into a drifty clod'. This tackles both the physiological and psychological symptoms that may follow exposure to such environments. In this context, the banner indirectly confirms John Stauffer's idea above that protest literature offers a solution to society's ills: the frustration explored in the poem can be the first step in a long series of events that can ultimately lead to action. A sense of distress clouds over the poem to ultimately encourage the reader/viewer to envision an alternative future in which our current political and ecological uncertainty expands significantly.

Aesthetically, the banner uses some of the pictorial qualities that are evident in O'Sullivan's visual banner work (7), including colourful dangling feathers and ribbons and its emphasis on found materials or 'the cast-offs, the unwanted' as O'Sullivan calls them (O'Sullivan, 2022b). Although aesthetically, O'Sullivan's piece is more material-heavy and vibrant in colour, there are parallels between the two works, particularly in relation to texture. The vast majority of the materials used in my banner (e.g., the ribbons, polypropylene strapping, cable ties, wood and felt) were salvaged from a local furniture store skip container in the centre of Guildford. This is intended to motivate the recycling of materials and encourage practitioners to consider using found objects in an age marked by global warming. Among the many materials that these works have in common are feathers. According to John Geb, and in the context of law studies, 'the use of feathers and of artifacts made partly of feathers has, since ancient time, been an integral part of the traditional way of life of American Indians' while it also fuelled discriminatory punishment connected to the possession of feathers against Native American communities (Geb, 1974: 111). The latter is echoed in the words of my poem that convey messages of injustice and despair. The vibrancy in colour and aesthetic is disrupted in my piece

with the traces of blood and red ink (that appears to be blood) throughout, particularly in the shape of palms; this alludes to a violent exchange taking place in the proximity of the banner and complements the dystopian diathesis of the text.

Wearable poetry, living poetry

Messages held close to the chest and up high for everyone to see as crowds gather to voice fury, messages worn closely to the body and paraded, producing sonic ripples for justice. Both Dugger's 'Chile, Vencerá' banner and its accompanying sweater by Vicuña highlight a noteworthy interchange between object and wearer: most importantly, the text in these two forms becomes the mediator between the physical body and 'the world'. In addition to the linguistic qualities of the text itself, poetic meaning can also be portrayed through gestures and voice, as the embodied example above showed. As the fist clenches, the message becomes louder. Focussing on Vicuña's sweater as an example of wearable text-art, the object comes to life when being worn – its message is amplified as the person wearing it identifies with a kindred political ideology and has the ability to elaborate on the sweater's message. Through the new materialist lens of viscous porosity, a concept by Nancy Tuana in relation to the impact of Hurricane Katrina, which addresses the porous interchange between bodies and their surroundings, the close proximity of words to one's body is capable of producing important meanings (Tuana, 2008) – a 'viscous porosity of flesh—my flesh and the flesh of the world' (Tuana, 2008: 199). Tuana's viscous porosity proposes an entanglement with our environments, both physically and figuratively, which highlights the crucially political and social elements in our surroundings and our connections with them:

The dance of agency between human and nonhuman agents also happens at a more intimate level. The boundaries between our flesh and the flesh of the world we are of and in is porous. While that porosity is what allows us to flourish [...] this porosity often does not discriminate against that which can kill us. (Tuana, 2008: 198)

In viscous porosity, the 'pores' enable inevitable flows. On a practical level, the sweater offers heat and comfort to the person wearing it and allows them to identify with a movement or idea openly – the object's 'crust' lays closely to the bodily pores of the skin. The interchangeable energy between the body and wearable object manifests itself in multiple ways, as discussed here, and makes works in this mode memorable and impactful.

Moving on from Vicuña's 'Chile, Vencera' sweater, other more contemporary examples of work with similar qualities include Dulcinea Catadora's wearable cartonera books in Brazil⁵ and the wider cartonera practice in Latin America (8). Elizabeth Gray (2018) explains that this movement emerged in Argentina in 2003 at a time when half of the country fell into living conditions below the poverty line, and people turned to making a living out of salvaging and reselling recyclable materials. These are particularly relevant as they stand as specimens of tangible literature that serve as modes of resistance and activism. Lucy Bell, Alex Ungprateeb Flynn and Patrick O'Hare shed light on some of cartonera's characteristics that echo some of the sentiments of wearable poems with political significance:

A deeply processual approach to literature allows cartoneras to foreground the book as a living thing, and the act of bringing these objects to life produces meaningful encounters with an excluded and marginalized other. (Bell et al., 2022: 115)



8 Gray, Street intervention, 2018.

What stands out in this sentence is the perception of a creative artefact as a 'living thing', an idea close to Tuana's viscous porosity that argues for the vitality of things. Bell et al. highlight the importance of developing a deeper engagement with objects beyond the human's common perception of them as mere tools existing for consumption; they advocate about finding more sustainable ways in engaging with materials (Bell et al., 2022). Cartoneras are made of recycled and found resources, and ultimately 'unstitch the prevailing colonial relations that continue to divide Latin American society through hierarchies based on gender, race, and class; and [...] restitch the social through artistic practice and literary creation' (Bell et al., 2022: 115). Thus, these creative encounters enable diverse communities to be 'restitched', as Bell et al. put it: their social and ecological stratification is reconfigured through a medium that plays sustainably with materials available to them.

These two elements, the enabling of diverse communities that disrupt existing social structures and hierarchies and the emphasis on sustainability that characterises cartonera, are directly connected to wearable text art (or visual poetry, depending on the definition of the creator) that has historically featured in protests: from the widely-known AIDS Memorial Quilt to immigrants and their supporters forming a human chain to portray anti-Trump messages while wearing poncho-style sheets in Cleveland in 2016 (9) and the iconic 2017 Women's March in Washington (10) in which 'hundreds of thousands of protesters, the majority of which were women, wore their fluffy pink hats' (May, 2020: 77) as a 'texture in the struggle for feminist solidarity' (May, 2020: 85). In all instances, marginalised groups played cleverly with text and texture to create an alternative to the conventional banner form seen in protests. This not only



9 Hing, *Immigrant-rights protesters at the RNC, 2016.*



10 Caballero-Reynold, *Protester at the Women's March, 2017.*

demonstrates creative skills and imagination but also makes a memorable gendered-focused political statement – works in this mode invoke the spaces in which violence occurs and rethink city streets as spaces of resistance and solidarity.

Another aspect of cartonera that is relevant to politically charged wearable text-art or wearable poems (depending on the creator's definition) comes from Maria Paula Botero, a member of the MILBI collective (translating as 'Lesbian and Bisexual Immigrant Women'). Botero explains that people are interested and curious about this type of work because 'it escapes the norms of aesthetics, it escapes from the forms that things should take' (Botero in Bell et al., 2022: 245). Both the forms of cartonera and wearable text-art or visual poetry use a structure widely known to people outside the literature circles at their core; cartonera uses the form of a book, whereas wearable text-art may take the form of a familiar everyday garment (e.g., dress, poncho). This ultimately makes literature more accessible, as the form of a familiar object breaks the initial barrier between viewer and object – the viewer sees the outline of a recognisable form, thus, they may feel more likely to inspect it more closely given the potential related memories or prior knowledge surrounding an object. In this light, sculptural poems often take the shape of – and reshape or transform – recognisable objects, independently or as part of an assemblage or broader social sculpture.

Rachel Fallon is amongst the various contemporary artists and poets whose work enables marginalised voices to 'restitch' their positions and relations in highly stratified societies (or patriarchies) using sustainable materials to achieve that. 'Aprons of Power' (11) is part of an Artists' Campaign⁶ to repeal 'Article 40.3.3 of the Irish Constitution which equated the life of a pregnant person with that of the foetus which effectively banned abortion' (Fallon, 2018). Fallon's six-piece work 'Aprons of Power' is decorated with military mottos that are visible to the viewer as the aprons are unfolded and pulled up to the chest – similarly to Thalia Campbell's velvet patchwork banner 'Girls Say No to the Bombs', Fallon's banner combines military masculinity with feminist imagery. 'Aprons of Power' cleverly uses the apron, a functional accessory that has been historically associated with subservient housewives, as a means to reorient the viewer's perception of a familiar object and recontextualise it. Illustrations of watchful eyes are paired with uppercase phrases reappropriated from canonical military sources to give renewed meaning to a historically patriarchal foundation.

The viewer's perception is indeed reoriented. The apron, which is usually tied around the waist, has now been transformed. Made primarily of silk, felt and linen, the composition's message is projected 'inside-out' and is visible only when the bodies pull them up to the chest, thus covering their faces. This 'covering' adds universality to the figures of the women – their core identifiers, their faces, have now been replaced with political messages and 'watchful eyes'. *Any woman* could be standing behind the aprons. This technique creates a powerful impact on the viewer and demonstrates many of the points discussed so far: it challenges the common perception of the object, it destabilises patriarchal notions of the object, it empowers marginalised groups by giving them a voice and, lastly, demonstrates a sustainable approach to materials.

With this approach to materials in mind, I produced a poetic banner (12) that, just like Dulcinea Catadora's wearable cartonera books, can be worn around the neck through a loop. My banner challenges the traditional qualities of a familiar domestic object to, firstly, break the initial barrier between viewer and object (similarly to 'Aprons of Power') and, secondly reorient the viewer's perception by adding a scriptive quality. Rhythmically and linguistically, the poem is a response to eco-poet Elizabeth-Jane Burnett's recent poetry collection, *Of Sea* (2021), which



11 Ryan in Fallon, *Aprons of power performance*, 2018.



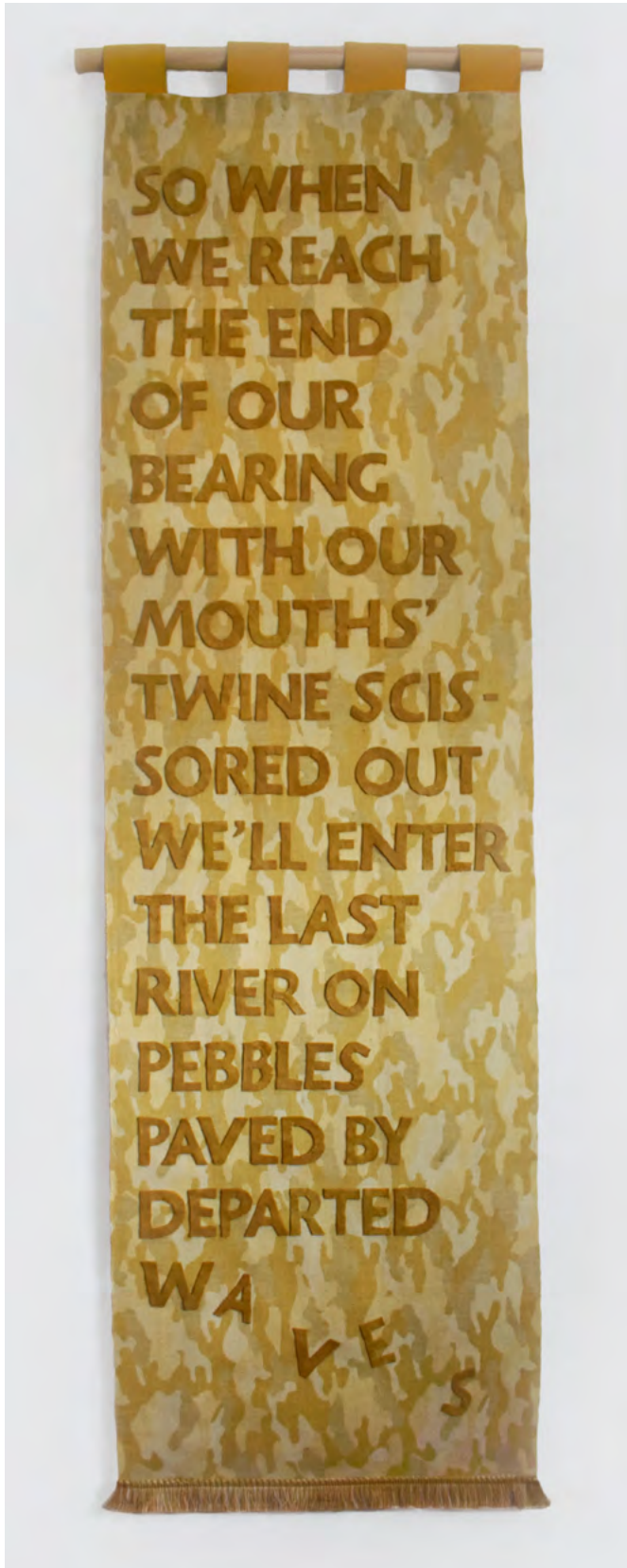
12 Papachristodoulou, *Unbodied*, 2021.

offers a spiritual and reflective approach to language. In her poem 'Barrel Jellyfish', she writes: 'As rusks, as plants growing in marshy ground, as wind. We be longing to peril, in press of pressing on' (Burnett, 2021: 6). To pay tribute to Burnett as well as attempting to reproduce the linguistic fluidity in *Of Sea*, I produced the following lines, which I transferred on the sack using charcoal felt:

as pulp, as seeds
roasted in the bare sun
mute, unbodied, as cremains,
we be longing for rain

In addition to Burnett's reverberation in terms of language, the poem uses the process of coffee production as an axis to discuss the effects of global warming upon humans and nonhumans: in the same way that the pulp and fruit skin are removed from coffee cherries for the obtainment of coffee seeds (commonly known as green coffee beans) which are dried and roasted, the human body and nature are stripped of our basic rights to development, access to clean water and nutrients, and a more adaptable climate all around. The bodies in the poem have been 'unbodied' and skinned, just like the coffee cherry, for exploitation. This element of exploitation is familiar in capitalist societies where the accumulation of capital can be regarded as more important than people and nature – things in such spaces have a 'functionality'. With this in mind, and intending to criticise such a model, the bodies in the banner have been roasted by extreme heatwaves and have become 'cremains' in the same way coffee beans are roasted in the heat to be utilised.

Similarly to cartonera which involves salvaging discarded materials, the banner's core material, a jute sack of Colombian coffee beans, produces meaning in conjunction with the text: the sack, which carries history in itself, has been ripped from the side for the obtainment of the coffee beans. This textile tear posits meaning through the convergence of material and sensorial force encompassed in the act of ripping, particularly in the context of global warming in which humans and nature's survival can be jeopardised and 'torn' as a result of exploitative spaces. Apart from the text, this sense of exploitation reverberates in Latin American coffee production itself, which is at the core of the piece. Steven Topik, John Talbot and Mario Samper (2010) write that in the last few decades, Latin American coffee societies have encountered multiple challenges, including the reduction of government assistance, the restructuring of the world market by enormous North American and European multinational corporations and political upheavals that have unsettled the countryside. They add that coffee growth has been concentrated in a few countries, especially Brazil and, to a lesser extent Peru, with most of other countries such as Colombia (which is most relevant to this discussion as the jute coffee bean sack is of Colombian origin) seeing 'declines in total coffee production as farmers diversify, migrate, or immigrate' (Topik et al., 2010: 18). This has resulted to most farmers of coffee in these areas working in small plots, exploitation of family labour and migration of earnings, amongst other things. They emphasise 'for most smallholders coffee is more a survival crop than a path to prosperity' (Topik et al., 2010: 18). There are multiple layers to consider here, particularly surrounding injustice and disregard for life. In addition to reorienting the viewer's perception of a familiar object to shed light on an ineffective social mechanism, this banner recontextualises a coffee sack's common perception and places it within the frame of climate change and social injustice.



12 Papachristodoulou, *Departed Waves*, 2022.

Poetry on the streets

The final example of work that I will be examining, 'Departed waves' (12), is an open invitation to a wider poetic intervention: poetry beyond the page that includes conversation as a propositional element and highlights a connection between society and literature. Thus, it mediates an interaction between creator and viewer – the words and meanings turn into ripples.

On September 27th, 2022, I took this ecclesiastic carpet-like banner to a demonstration organised by the climate activist group, Fossil Free London. This demonstration was held outside the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and concerned the numerous oil and gas projects that are about to be launched in the UK, with a focus on the Rosebank oil and gas field west of the Shetland Islands. I held my long banner to share my feelings of solidarity with fellow protesters. The banner, hopefully, contributes towards a much-needed wider poetic intervention: the urgency of taking poetry to the streets as an act of resistance. The physicality of the banner at *that moment* acted like 'glue' – a conversation starter, a mediator between myself and others that shared my fear for the future in the Anthropocene. Its materiality and tactility evoked a connection between body and activist intentions. In the context of viscous porosity, the banner opened the 'pores' for a new embodiment of language in a protest setting. The piece's language, fabric and shape fulfil the synthesis of a social sculpture – an object with the potential to bring about change, one thread at a time. Inspired by Fallon's



13 Unknown in Barnett, *Soldiers holding banner*, 2018.

usage of military mottos, my piece used a 1943 banner created by US Navy Military also known as ‘the Seabees’ as the basis for a new message of global warming (13). As seen in the relevant figure, US Navy Military men, (from the 2nd Marine Raider Regiment and 3rd Marine Division) posed with this sign on Bougainville to pay tribute to the Seabees (Barnett, 2018).⁷ Bell et al. have written on the potential of literature in the current decolonial struggle by highlighting ‘the creation of alternate stories from within a matrix of coloniality that can redefine, reconfigure and remake our world; a pluriversality that challenges hegemonic modes of being, knowing and thinking’ (Bell et al., 2022: 16).

In response to this, I turned the Seabees’ colonialist message that indulges in shallow and catastrophic nationalism into a message of suffering and mourning against the backdrop of the ongoing ecological catastrophe:

So when we reach the end of our bearing
with our mouths’ twine scissored out
we’ll enter the last river on pebbles
paved by departed waves

A sense of collective suffering exudes in the language of this poem which takes place in the aftermath of a battlefield. The absence of (or lack of access to clean) water and extreme heat in the poem (‘our mouth’s twine scissored out’), which are consequences of global warming, are central. The capital letters on the banner enhance the sense of urgency for change. The turmeric colour of the letters and banner itself help portray this image of a coarse flowerless landscape that has burnt down to crumbled soil. The poem becomes a device for condemning governmental decisions (such as the potential new oil and gas fields at the centre of the protest

of which this banner was part). It also spreads visibility of under-discussed issues and allows the poet to participate in a complex, multifaceted struggle. This is an example of poetry, not fixed to a page but liberated in a three-dimensional form and presented in a setting that relies on dialectic exchange and collectivity, using models that disrupt linearity and existing expectations of poetry.

In terms of form, what is notable is the 'deconstruction' of a camouflage pattern that is often linked to battle and masculinity, and its transformation into a tasselled carpet-like object with links to domesticity – an object existing 'below' that is *meant to be stepped on*. As a woman brought up in a patriarchal single-dad household in rural Greece, the idea of domesticity has connections to servitude and oppression – this can be a relatable connection made by viewers, particularly other women who have experienced toxic masculinity and have been affected by patriarchy in such way that their view of domesticity has been tampered with negatively. This element of servitude also relates partly to militaristic structures that rely on following orders from a higher authority.

The specimens of text-art here, examine tangible literature that serves as a mode of resistance and activism. They highlight an interchange between object and wearer that allow a deeper engagement with objects beyond the viewers' common perception of them as mere tools existing for human consumption. Most importantly, the examples presented in this paper exemplify the social aspect of sculptural work which, according to Bell et al., 'was construed as an intervention against the market's tendency to fetishize individual objects rendered special because of their denomination as "works of art"' (Bell et al., 2022: 27). These text-based works showcase language that is worn, torn, grasped, and held up high for the world to, hopefully, engage with.

Banner poetry and impact

My final contention to the analysis of the theories and praxes discussed in this paper is that banner poems mark a shift in the way we perceive and execute resistive literature as practitioners and readers. Protest banners, more so than common sculptural poems, pose questions around brevity, instantaneity, and the present moment – they do not merely exist in exhibition catalogues, anthologies, and gallery spaces (although they can also do that) but rather on the streets, reunited with their respective environments. Sculptural poems that exist in protests are also capable of all of that; poetry and protest language merge to address a unified message – collectivity is an important scope of such intricate creations, and the object's specification (whether a protest banner or a sculptural poem) depends on the perception of the viewer. As seen here, protest literature can take the form of a banner, a temporary tattoo, a poncho or a paper quilt, depending on the demonstration's demands and the banner's overall context – these works become an extension of the protester and a tool in expressing solidarity, resistance, and strength.

To answer the central question of this paper regarding the common threads between sculptural poems and protest banners, it is evident that both forms can shed light on the power of minimal text to portray an impactful message at a glance. While many sculptural poems encompass elements of ephemerality and fragility that, in themselves, suggest a more momentary perception of objects and have common threads to protest material, the historical use of banner form in a protest setting and the banner's characteristic functionality as an object in addressing current issues makes them as highly 'urgent' in nature.

There is something about being present, bodies chanting together, using language and gestures to express common ideas that project *alliance* – there are elements of unity and strength in physicality. As this paper has shown, corporeality is a vital element of protesting, much like writing or making poetry. In discussion with Penn students in Charles Bernstein’s *Studio 111* seminar, poet Maggie O’Sullivan remarked ‘Well, writing is a body-intensive activity, totally. Absolutely, totally. The whole body is engaged in the act of writing’ (O’Sullivan in Bernstein, 2007). It is the same corporeal engagement that produces a poem that stands up against injustice in protest. It is the same viscous porosity, in new materialist terms, that involves the inevitable interchange between bodies and their surroundings, the close proximity of the words to one’s body produce significant meaning (Tuana, 2008). It is words that add meaning and value to our engagement with our brittle landscapes.

Thus, banner poetry as a form, which I propose is the coming together of poetry and protest banners, stands as a societal intervention, as a reflection of one’s position in relation to social and ecological issues. It has the potential to destabilise canons, making the production and consumption of poetry more accessible and making room for healing through stitching and repurposing. The value of innovative poetry in times of precarity is highlighted by poet Stephen Mooney in the context of William Rowe’s poetry as a political response: ‘Times of revolution are reconstitutive of the strategies the poems employ as resistive’ (Mooney, 2020: 28). Against the status of partisan sloganism and the use and reuse of propaganda, misdirection, and falsehood, says Mooney (2020), works with a resistive vein, like Rowe’s, and like the banner poems shown here, become even more pronounced and necessary.

Often, protest materials and banners with poetic qualities are positioned as objects that can aid in creating much-needed solidarity between human and nonhuman objects and beings through their unique closeness to individuals, physically and metaphorically. Many of the works in this mode allow one to see beyond an object’s common perception as mere tools existing for human consumption and encourage societies to look for more vigorous ways to engage with materials in the Anthropocene. Collated here is an assemblage of functional poetics that connect political thought with the material body as an affective site of production and reception of meaning entangled with our fear for the future and, ultimately our ability to stand against injustice. This is the kind of poetry that becomes an extension of our hands in protest, poetry that we feel against our skin; this is poetry that serves to address the dialectic relationship between text, textiles, and ecofeminist protest, but also acts as an intervention into our wider literary stratification by awakening our sensorial dimension. The materiality and language of protest materials, established in the corners of marginalised communities, invite solidarity with objects and our landscapes, and holds transformative power with the potential to change. This is the kind of sculptural poetry that serves a function, not in a consumerist sense, but in a sensorial, entangled sense, one that helps us reach our potential to each become more *pronounced*.

Notes

¹ Salvador Allende's government, which marked the first socialist leader who pursued a progressive agenda, got overthrown by a military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet leading to Allende's death. According to Manuel Alcides Jofre, this political transition seized the once-allowed communication systems for differences of opinion and led to permanent distrust and fragmentation: "self-repression, disciplinary hierarchies, traumas, torture and death" (Jofre, 1989: 73).

² For instance, Maggie O'Sullivan's *Out of Everywhere* (Reality Street) anthology, published in 1996, showcased linguistically innovative poetry by women in North America & the UK who have been historically excluded from innovative poetry anthologies.

³ Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was the longest-running women's peace camp (1981-2000) established to protest nuclear weapons being placed at RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire, England.

⁴ In the context of political theory, Sophie Smith argues that gender stereotyping remains entrenched in society in terms of both social behaviours and biological determinism (Smith, 2014).

⁵ According to Bell et al., 'this practice has been developed in the many years since the collective's foundation and perhaps achieved most visibility in 2013 with the collective's invitation to participate in the exhibition 'O Abrigo e O Terreno' ('Shelter and Land')' (Bell et al. 2022: 225).

⁶ The Artists' Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment was founded by artists Cecily Brennan, Eithne Jordan, Alice Maher and poet Paula Meehan in 2015 (Fallon, 2018). The work was created in 2018 when the Article was revoked following a referendum as a means 'to create a visual culture that is more hopeful' (Fallon in Saner, 2018).

⁷ According to Robyn King, the Seabees' insignia was created by Frank J. Iafrate in 1942. Along with their motto, 'We Build, We Fight,' the symbol of the Fighting Seabee 'encompasses the essence of what it means to serve ones' country' (King, 2015).

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Astra Papachristodoulou has recently completed a practice-based poetry PhD at the University of Surrey with a focus on sculptural poetics as a revolutionary act in the context of the Anthropocene. Her doctoral project at Surrey was funded by the Doctoral College Studentship Award. Astra is the author of several books of poetry including *Constellations* (Guillemot Press) and her poetry has appeared in many UK and international magazines, anthologies, and visual poetry exhibitions.



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USYD STRIKE AND PICKET ZINE

Anastasia Radievska and Niko Chłopicki

Design by Jacqui Adams

Photographs by Aman Kapoor

Editing by Niko Chłopicki,
and Anastasia Radievska



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Print the pages of the book file on A4 (or A3) paper with your settings at Landscape orientation and 'Double-sided with short-edge (left) binding'. Fold the bundle in half, short ends together, and press the spine with something firm (handle of a dinner knife, or back of a wooden spoon) to form an 8-page A5 (or A4) booklet. Bind by stapling, tying or sewing if desired.

USYD STRIKE AND PICKET ZINE

Anastasia Radievska & Niko Chłopicki

The USYD Strike and Picket Zine is a collaborative DIY publication capturing, celebrating and complicating the experience of being on the picket lines during staff strikes at the University of Sydney in 2022. This zine grew out of conversations between staff and students participating in several days of industrial action on campus in May led by the National Tertiary Education Union. The strikes followed several months of Enterprise Bargaining Agreement negotiations during which the University refused to meet staff demands for a fair pay increase, an end to exploitative casualisation and casual wage-theft, improved parental leave and enforceable targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

For most staff and students, the strike in May 2022 marked their first time participating in industrial action. The picket lines formed at major entrances to the university became sites of multiple encounters – preconceptions about industrial action with its reality; those attempting to disrupt the strike with those engaging in it; and managerial, worker, individual and collective discourses with each other.

These encounters were occasions for new and often intense kinds of affect, as participants worked to win support for the strike from those attempting to cross the picket line, whose responses ranged from enthusiastic to physically aggressive. In the process, the picketers created a spontaneous collectivity that had its own voice, mythologies and vocabularies. The picket line thus became a place of intense, if short-lived, community marked by its orientation towards collective struggle and solidarity.

The zine grew out of a desire to capture the experience of this unique kind of collectivity, which despite the declining rate of union membership saw a recent upsurge in NSW as the public sector engaged in a wave of strikes over the course of 2022. In the course of its production the zine became not only an expression of collective struggle but also a tool for its continuation, being used to raise funds for the casual staff strike fund and creating opportunities to jointly reaffirm commitment to the ongoing campaign. Poems from the zine were read on subsequent picket lines and copies of it used to raise awareness about the campaign. This speaks to the continued power of DIY print media to create and reinforce community even as digital forms gain prominence.

The images used for the zine design were sourced from photographs of the pickets by a local protest photographer and the visual language of the zine makes clear reference to the second wave punk movement, which saw the prolific production of community-based fanzines with radical political messaging. The designer worked on the zine alongside a broader project investigating the intersection between design theory and radical political theory – a creative practice incorporating non-hierarchical, participatory methods that mirror core tenets of socialist theory and the qualities of community organising for a strike and picket. The visual and textual languages of the zine were thus involved in a dialogue marked by centring community, participation and a DIY ethos.

The zine's freedom from institutional or publishing house constraints makes it an ideal format for rapidly producing a joint reflection on collective experiences that then circulates back into the community to be taken up, interrogated and repurposed. Its physicality and collective

ownership therefore enable it to play a unique role in social movements – in this case as a hybrid self-historization, propaganda piece, fundraising tool and communal catharsis.



About the artists

Anastasia Radievska is a poet, organiser and researcher living on Gadigal Land. Her poetry has appeared in *Rabbit*, *Cordite Poetry Review* and the Red Room Anthology *Writing Water*. Niko Chłopicki currently resides on Gadigal land, works as a lifeguard at an indoor pool and is a member of the United Services Union. He completed his Honours in Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong in 2019 & has publications in *Marrickville Pause*, *Subbed In*, *Plumwood Mountain*, and *Cordite Poetry Review*. Jacqui Adams (they/them) is a non-binary artist and photographer working and living on Gadigal land. Their work usually sits in the intersection between visual communication and leftist political theory.

Design by Jacqui Adams

Photographs by Aman Kapoor

Editing by Niko Chlopicki,
and Anastasia Radievska



Donate to the NTEU strike fund

USYD Strike and Picket Zine is a staff-student collaboration
and not an officially NTEU-endorsed publication

USYD Strike & Picket Zine





We would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, on whose land this zine was created and on whose land the University of Sydney's campus stands. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and recognise that this always was and always will be Aboriginal land. Sovereignty was never ceded.

An ABC of the USyd Strike (Abridged)

Toby Fitch

A is for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders** — I'd like to acknowledge the Gadigal people on whose unceded lands the main campus of the University of Sydney stands. USyd actually occupies the lands of 15 different Indigenous groups. I'd also like to acknowledge that University management needs to create enforceable targets for First Nations jobs, which should at least match population density. 3% of the broader population identifies as Aboriginal or

B is for **Bargaining in Bad Faith** — According to the NTEU, for 9 months University management have not bargained in good faith, agreeing to none of the negotiations over workload creep, casualisation, a pay rise, and maintaining the right to 40% research quotas for academics, among other issues the NTEU has proposed to fix in the new Enterprise Agreement (EA).

effectual strikes

strikes like
the mysterious armchair of a poet

strikes of wine & roses,
during the strike, a thing
—very minute— can happen to you
and you will notice.

a-mazing strikes! long
necks of Cooper's Red! Jordi's flipping through
State & Rev, getting ideas for strikes & Adam's here too
designing a poster

strikes
full of tears, the tearful strikes
mysterious strikes
& strikes dripping in marvel

living brilliantly

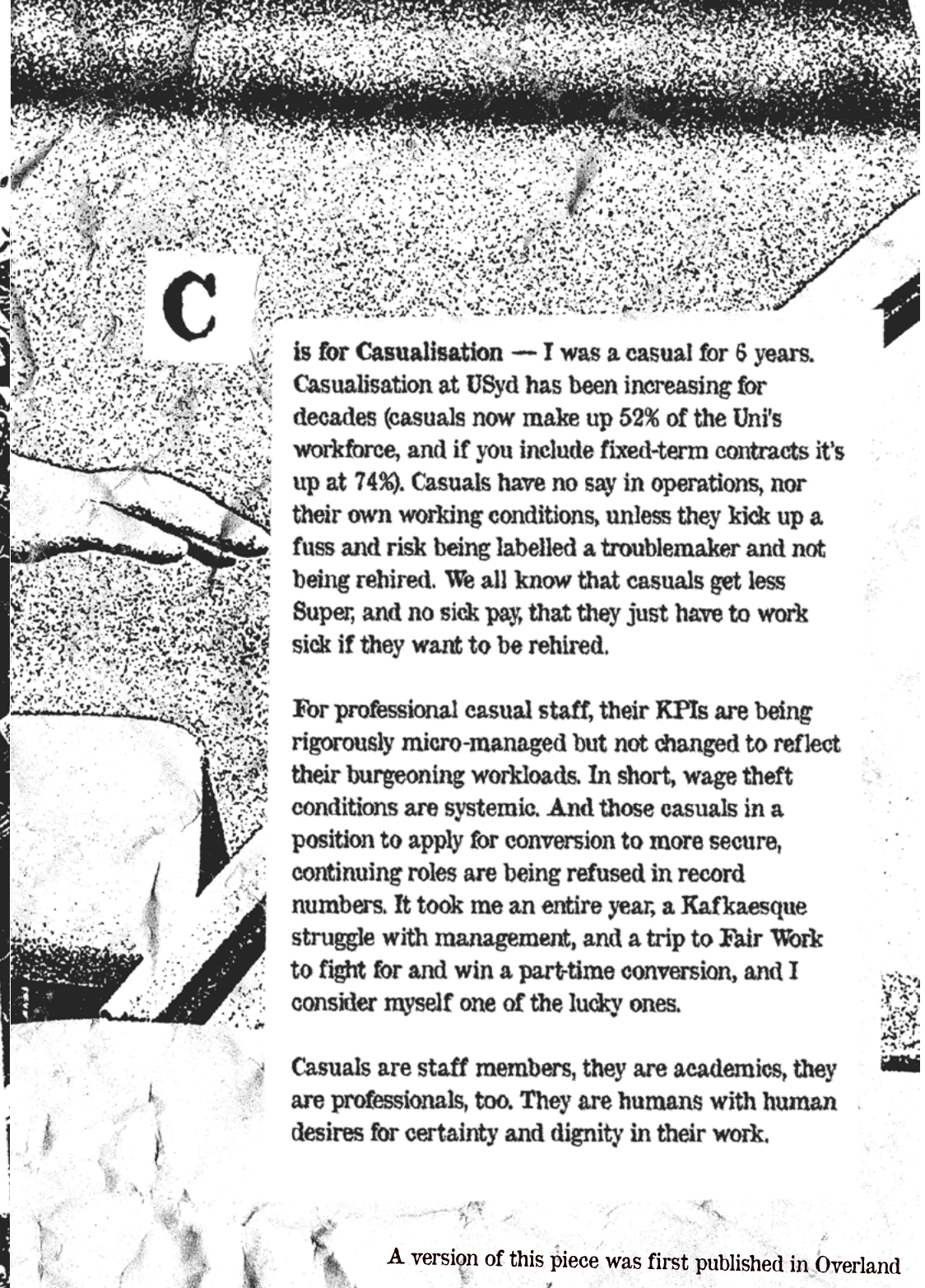
the marvellous strikes of mayhem



picket lines, their beauty consisting of their pursuit of the breath
of fresh air
beautiful & cool & tendril-like (like the arms of cranes above the
tallest buildings of the city.

strikes like tendrils.
elixir strikes. strikes like Miles Davis
like Briggs

me make another marvellous strike
& slowly decide / that we'll go for a walk



is for Casualisation — I was a casual for 6 years. Casualisation at USyd has been increasing for decades (casuals now make up 52% of the Uni's workforce, and if you include fixed-term contracts it's up at 74%). Casuals have no say in operations, nor their own working conditions, unless they kick up a fuss and risk being labelled a troublemaker and not being rehired. We all know that casuals get less Super, and no sick pay, that they just have to work sick if they want to be rehired.

For professional casual staff, their KPIs are being rigorously micro-managed but not changed to reflect their burgeoning workloads. In short, wage theft conditions are systemic. And those casuals in a position to apply for conversion to more secure, continuing roles are being refused in record numbers. It took me an entire year, a Kafkaesque struggle with management, and a trip to Fair Work to fight for and win a part-time conversion, and I consider myself one of the lucky ones.

Casuals are staff members, they are academics, they are professionals, too. They are humans with human desires for certainty and dignity in their work.

E

is for Enterprise Agreement — the document that enshrines how the University and its workplace practices are governed. E is also for the erasure of an egalitarian workplace and equitable working conditions. E is for the exploitation of casual and precarious staff, the majority of whom are women, gender-diverse and workers from migrant minorities. E is for e-learning and workload creep. E is for ennui. I'm so fucking bored of being exploited and watching my colleagues be exploited and feeling like there's nothing that can be done about it.

F

is for Funding — or lack thereof. The last few Liberal governments have been waging a war on the left and on Higher Education, stripping funding from the sector again and again. Their latest budget included even more cuts. I hope the new Labor government can turn this dire situation around and restore funding to the sector. [Hey Albo, why not make education free again, the way Whitlam did?] In the meantime, please, if you can, donate to the Strike Fund so that casuals and other precarious workers can recoup the wages they're forfeiting for going on strike.

strikes

as if there is something that is 'possible'

strikes

that seem as though meant for disaster & we don't care about it

—all of us chant around together

doing something together while real 'meaningless' clouds

gather

& the rest of the world/looks awful

(& the next day when you wake it's rain!)

in the glass there is beer still. we take the glass. soon comes a beer neither cheerless not cheerful

—
from the fridge / comes a beer

we lean across and light each

other's cigarette's (applause)

we got to sleep & wake up

& spend the night,

which is not hot & clear; doing

'nothing'

—listening

to the strikes coming from blocks away

(through the air!)

strikes

full of community (like
Sorry to Bother You);

& tiny strikes
-you occasionally get them, recovering from the others,
very small, & where nothing happens

& strikes as if!
strikes as if nervous
& strikes as if

the whole world had stopped for the "pause
that refreshes" & could not get going.

Strikes

as if everything was marvellous mayhem

: they are lingering opportunities for things one
must do

& one does do them

M

is for Moral Dilemma — Potential strikebreakers
(or 'scabs') are faced with a moral dilemma at a
picket line because a strike is not simply a rally. You
can't opt in or out of choosing a side at your work.
Whether you're a student or a worker at USyd, if you
don't join the strike, you oppose it. You can't support
the strike and its demands but then cross the picket.
If you cross it, you're supporting management.
Perhaps the harsh industrial laws in Australia have
made people forget the moral clarity of the picket,
where there is 'No room for neoliberal cooptations of
identity politics.'

N

is for Never let a good crisis go to waste —
Management have given us a Masterclass in disaster
capitalism. As a result of the pandemic, instead of
drawing on their, at the time, \$432m war chest,
selling land, reducing marketing and outsourcing to
exorbitant contractors, so as to save money, the
University insisted that various schools and faculties
be restructured, which facilitated the cutting of
casual staff and a 'voluntary redundancy program'
for permanent staff. It's always the pandemic's fault,
apparently, even though enrolments are up and the
Uni keeps recording surpluses. Its latest Annual
Report reveals a \$1.04 billion operating surplus and
a \$1.24 billion 'future fund' for rainy days and
discretionary spending.

U

U is for Union — It's the only way we can win the fight for better, fairer working conditions: in union.

W

W is for Wage Theft — To avoid wage theft, you have to become a witch or warlock, or turn into a werewolf to stay up all night to get the work done. Management are wedded to wage theft. It's baked into the system. Perhaps former VC Michael Spence ('of the 1%') dubbed casuals 'warm bodies' to make them less human, just another set of numbers, so that wage theft wouldn't feel wrong to him.

frankly stellar

the effect of Lenin

the effect of Cliff

the effect of Solidarity, (the effect

of taking all our personal effects

&

nailing them to the VC & comparing them

& of thinking how that, in effect,

was like a strike, &

the

effect

of looking at the strike

& knowing

you could / be there.

Nurses! Teachers!

buses. You too could be free & crossing the road.

like the blurred speech of a

megaphone

clamour insistent & loud

idolatrous strikes

never-to-be-forgotten strikes,

& strikes

that make one totally forget

(-the strikes, when after one's

important thinking is done & we don't realise : like a banner

they take a while to paint

-& then! hurrah for thinking!

the marvellous photos Aman takes then gets shared of us round

our different socials

on the nights of the days of strikes

'hermeneutic' strikes
New social media strikes

liminary strikes & strikes
when the pulse beats furiously

& now - risky as
rapids "boys in blue" appear & out of the blue we're
not out to sea yet

daring, excited/threatened,

in the deep blue

close inimical blue
the cool strikes

a cool dry strike -real, but built as anything
is felt

& suddenly our wit, our whole
frame of mind, becomes like a strike

(& suddenly (ha! ha!)
out of the blue the poems of Sean Bonney

seem

mannered

incredibly
long strikes.

strikes
of what must be
a legendary witticism; strikes/
without parallel

& strikes, strikes, & strikes of them all, that

are

exactly - the - same

Y

Y is for Yes Minister — that British TV comedy about politicians and their weasel words. When imagining executive management triaging the possibility of further cuts to the sector by the Liberal government, I recalled this brief exchange between two ministers from the show:

Minister: In Stage 1, we say, 'Nothing's going to happen.'

Other minister: In stage 2, we say, 'Something is maybe going to happen but we should do nothing about it.'

Minister: In Stage 3, we say, 'That maybe we should do something about it but there's nothing we can do.'

Other minister: In Stage 4, we say, 'Maybe there was something we could have done but it's too late now'

Z

Z is for Zero Marks — As an academic who has done my fair share of marking, I give executive management zero marks for the way they have run the University and approached bargaining for the new Enterprise Agreement. On top of everything I've already said, let's assess management's written work, their emails: management's emails have not directly addressed the NTEU's and workers' concerns about working conditions; their emails are instead circulatory and full of vagaries, jargon, bureaucratic chicanery, excuses, half-truths, empty platitudes and self-fulfilling prophecies. That is not good scholarship. Zero marks! Management are failing us.

Niko Chlopicki

the marvellous month of mayhem
is here again

already

& strikes have begun —Toby's
got a permanent job, guaranteed.

list of adjectives for strikes:

terrific strikes

elegant strikes

eloquent strikes, strikes

like spring & strikes

like summer

impenetrable strikes

literal strikes

the sassiest of strikes

& strikes that are stoical, classical or cool

strikes

which the art

in our mind makes

strikes like painting

—like MUA strikes

like Invasion Day & terrific strikes

like Smeaton Grange

The Marvellous Strikes of Mayhem

(After Ken Bolton)

sometimes it really seems
as if "strike" is such a whispered gentle word
(strikes of desire)

desperateness
desperation

the whole of

a strike

about being desperate,

full of

tension nervousness & mayhem
with things in it like

touch one, touch all

& ending, falsely,

too many coppers

the air risks itself among our hair & everything

is contained



Adam Adelpour

Kimberly E Lacombe

With the University of Sydney's 2021 Operating Surplus in \$1 Coins

you could fill a vast underground vault the size of seven thousand swimming pools

and not have enough room to close the door.

you could construct a fleet of antique gunboats

loaded for war, with the finest modern coin cannonry.

you could build a miniature bridge to Auckland

wide enough only for ants advancing in single file.

you could raise a tower to wave at the astronauts in the

International Space Station

and then keep going and going and going

until you got first class seats to watch the moon.



"Look, I don't care if it's winter and you want to hibernate - we have to go and join the strike..."

Julian Wood

A Picket Haiku

irms always looked
so cool until i saw them
stampede the picket

Mila Heneck

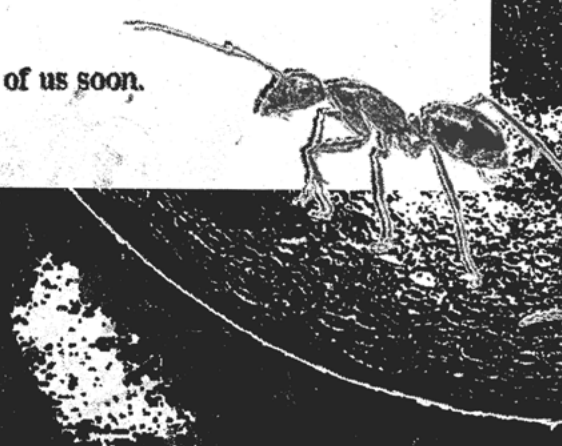
I'm standing at the gates where that moon is far away
and rain crashes in waves like a hail of mocking coins
where one point zero four billion dollars is used less fantastically
and our empty pockets swell from the rain
giving us water balloon handgun holsters
like we're a row of renegade cowboys, baby! Loaded to duel.
You could say a strike is a game of chicken
between your life and your boss's luxury car,

but it's really a game of who runs the world:
our head and hands, or a baffling quantity of coins
and it's the luxury cars that play chicken with intentional vehicular
manslaughter
when they push the throttle and we return fire
and the droplets fly from line to line
and the rushing water robs those vast vaults blind
and the antique gunboats fire harmless coin confetti in their fright
and the ants carry the water on their backs overnight

from city to city, til every one's alight
and we link our arms and drift to the moon
which was close all along
and will have enough seats for all of us soon.



Wanyi Xin



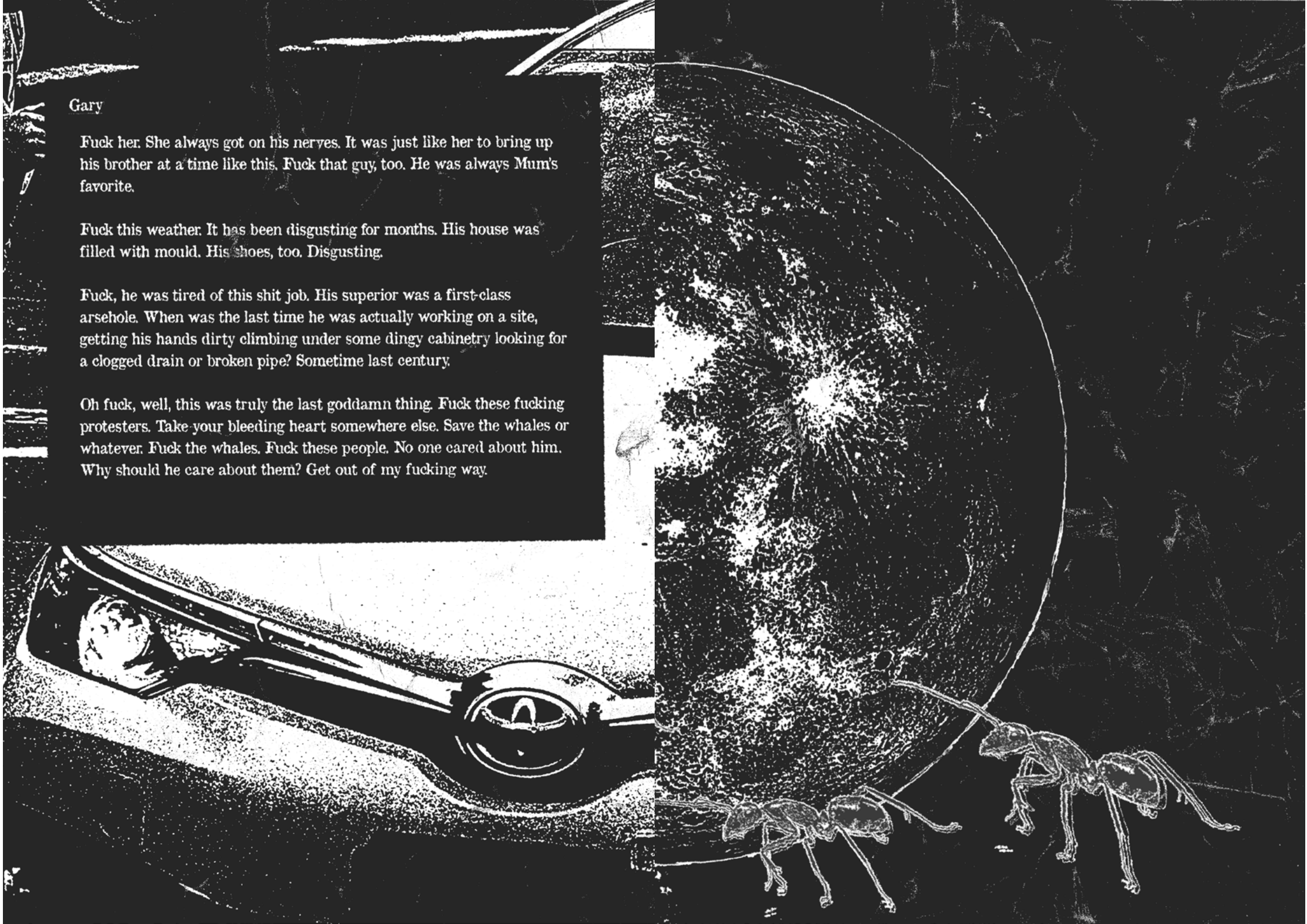
Gary

Fuck her. She always got on his nerves. It was just like her to bring up his brother at a time like this. Fuck that guy, too. He was always Mum's favorite.

Fuck this weather. It has been disgusting for months. His house was filled with mould. His shoes, too. Disgusting.

Fuck, he was tired of this shit job. His superior was a first-class arsehole. When was the last time he was actually working on a site, getting his hands dirty climbing under some dingy cabinetry looking for a clogged drain or broken pipe? Sometime last century.

Oh fuck, well, this was truly the last goddamn thing. Fuck these fucking protesters. Take your bleeding heart somewhere else. Save the whales or whatever. Fuck the whales. Fuck these people. No one cared about him. Why should he care about them? Get out of my fucking way.



On the Picket Line With You

Niko Chlopicki

is even more fun than going to Caslaw, Fisher, Wentworth, Madsen

New Law or Wallace Theatre

or being sick to your stomach only having 7 seconds to mark a

3,000 word essay

partly because in our union shirts we look like a happier version

of F23

partly because of our solidarity, partly because of our love for apple vapes

partly because of the anti-terrorist pots on western ave being so

good for chalking

partly because of the secrecy our smiles take before the riot cops

it is hard to believe we are here and that anything can be as still

as solemn as pleasantly definitive as when right in front of us

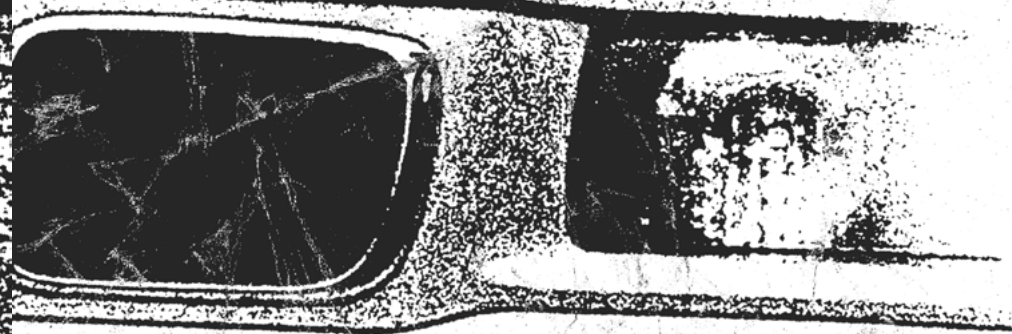
in the warm 7am Gadigal light we are drifting forth between

each other like full-time casuals breathing through their spectacles

And there they were—all those classmates cosplaying poverty. They didn't know a thing about the real world. Not like him. He'd worked hard all summer, running spreadsheets through January and February. And he'd be studying hard this term, while they were out doing shrooms and talking about polyamory. Bloody ridiculous. He was keeping his head down, studying accounting and finance five days a week. Real stuff—not feminist basket weaving or whatever these losers were up to.

They didn't intimidate him. Actually, it was a bit of fun to hear the whimpering tones of these fools as they asked him not to cross the line. It's my right to go on campus. You can't stop me. He pushed through, met with boos. Fuck em.

Only then did he see the message from Laura. "Strike on campus, let's meet at the Glebe library!"



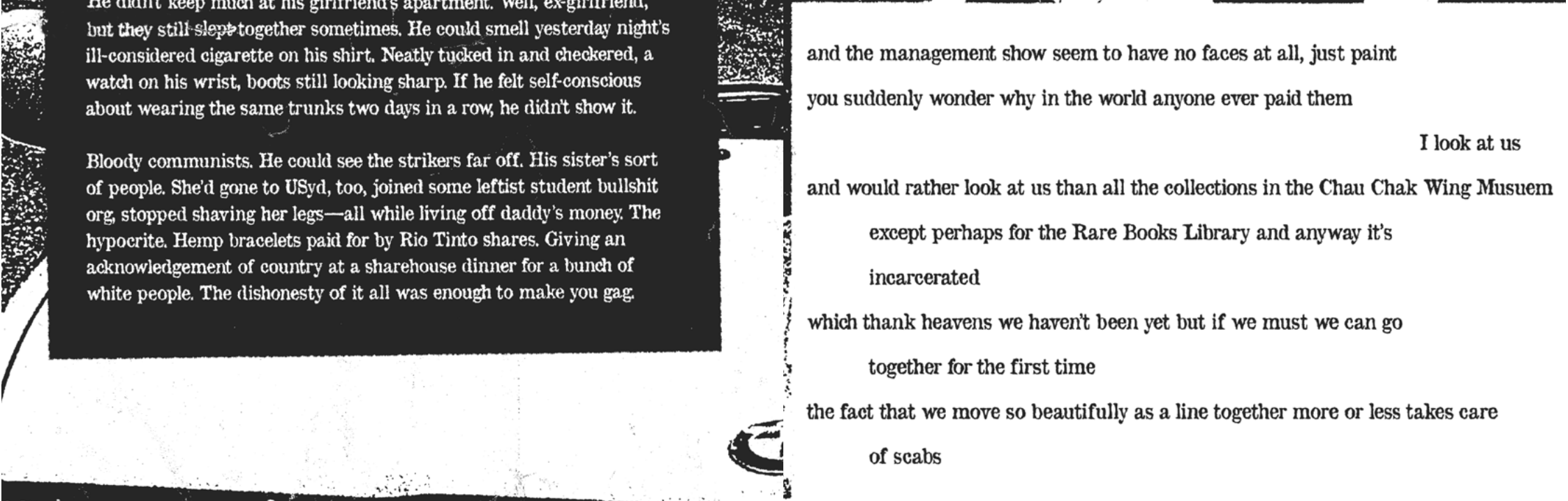


James

Shit, he'd never been this late before. James restrained the desire to yell at the Uber driver. Two previous rides had been cancelled. This one circled the block before finding the apartment. He'd be late to his study group, and Laura would probably cast him some side eye.

He didn't keep much at his girlfriend's apartment. Well, ex-girlfriend, but they still slept together sometimes. He could smell yesterday night's ill-considered cigarette on his shirt. Neatly tucked in and checkered, a watch on his wrist, boots still looking sharp. If he felt self-conscious about wearing the same trunks two days in a row, he didn't show it.

Bloody communists. He could see the strikers far off. His sister's sort of people. She'd gone to USyd, too, joined some leftist student bullshit org, stopped shaving her legs—all while living off daddy's money. The hypocrite. Hemp bracelets paid for by Rio Tinto shares. Giving an acknowledgement of country at a sharehouse dinner for a bunch of white people. The dishonesty of it all was enough to make you gag.



and the management show seem to have no faces at all, just paint
you suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever paid them

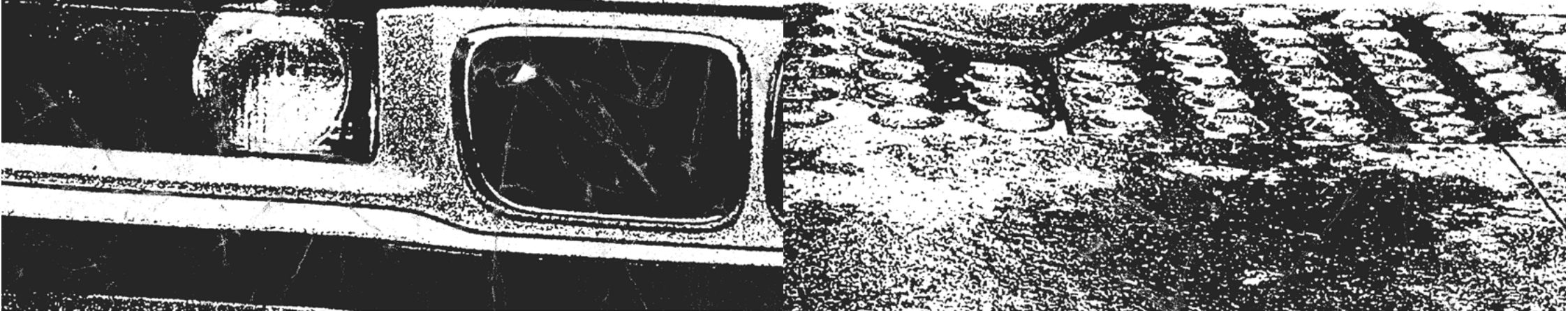
I look at us


and would rather look at us than all the collections in the Chau Chak Wing Museum

except perhaps for the Rare Books Library and anyway it's
incarcerated

which thank heavens we haven't been yet but if we must we can go
together for the first time

the fact that we move so beautifully as a line together more or less takes care
of scabs





just as at home we never think of the hermeneutically suspicious or in classes the

EBA that used to wow us

and what good does all the research of the VC PR HR team do them

when they never got the right conditions to stand near the sandstone when the

sun sank

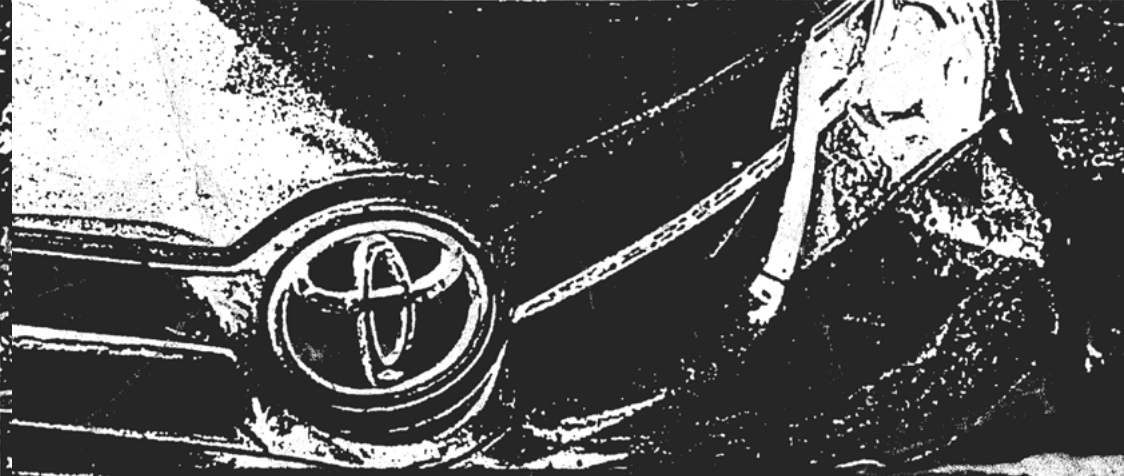
or for that matter JAR-ghos not picking the right complexities

of the interpellative moment

it seems that we were all cheated of some marvelous


experience

which is not going to be wasted on us which is why we're here telling you about it



Of course, the University brought this on themselves. She nodded along to an article she read in *The Saturday Paper* by Ellen Smith. It described in bracing terms the problems endemic to higher education. So much had changed since the days of free Uni & state-supported education. Really, something had to be done about it.

She apologetically explained to the picketers that she understood and supported their cause. Of course they were right to be furious. Of course she regretted breaking the picket—she supported them but had to work in her office today. The picket line, after all, is symbolic—the real battles happen at the polls. And that would happen either way. Whereas her work—that had to happen by her own agency. She could control it getting done. And it must get done. She had to get dressed, get breakfast, get in the car and go. She had to get to work. She understood them—why couldn't they understand her?



A Perhaps Perverse Obsession with Scab Psychology

In Three Movements

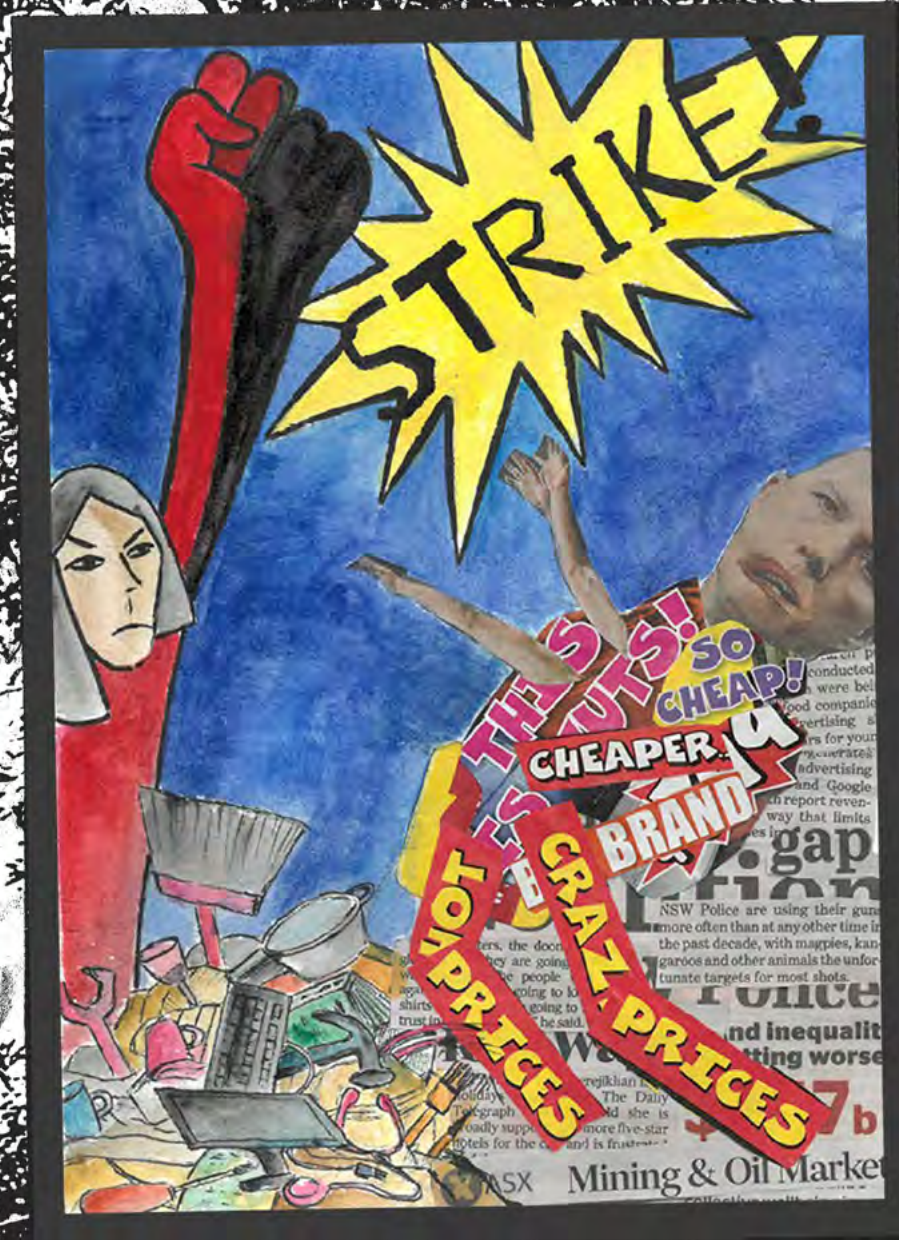
Emily Hulme

Beatriz

Just perfect, just so. It was 9:30AM, a Wednesday. Beatriz had to go into her office today; before that, she had to get dressed, get breakfast, get in the car and go. She fixed her scarf in the mirror, dabbed her lipstick. Everything in its place, and a place for everything. [Fictional editor's note: she meant a cravat, not a scarf—this doesn't suggest our author has much of an eye for detail!]

She arrived on campus. She turned easily into the car park, running through in her head already her to-do list. Agenda: Latin for what must be done. As she exited the car, she caught her own reflection in the mirror. She cut a rather striking figure—fiftyish, elegant, confident. On a rainy, gloomy, dreary day, a day that would see most passersby clinging like fleas to the shop awnings along the edge of the road, she advanced with long strides into the open field, bisecting Victoria Park.

As she drew closer to the gates of campus, an unexpected scene emerged. A motley crew of unusual figures surrounded the gates. This was unusual indeed, especially on this rainy day. Of course, she had forgotten—there was a strike on. The picketers stood by the gates—barnacles on the hull of a scuttled ship, swept by water over and over.



Wanyi Xin

On On the Picket Line With You

Anastasia Radievska

You asked me if I knew how much fun it was on the picket line with you

I said I vaguely imagined it but didn't really

and then you told me in its entirety as we were walking

from somewhere down by New Law down to Charles Perkins

and the whole time you were telling me I was thinking

"Was that the end of the picket?" after every line

and each time I thought that, I thought it more intensely

because as the picket grew stronger the fact that we were creating

it from memory became increasingly harder to believe

until about halfway through the picket I stopped thinking

about how long it was and started just listening to us

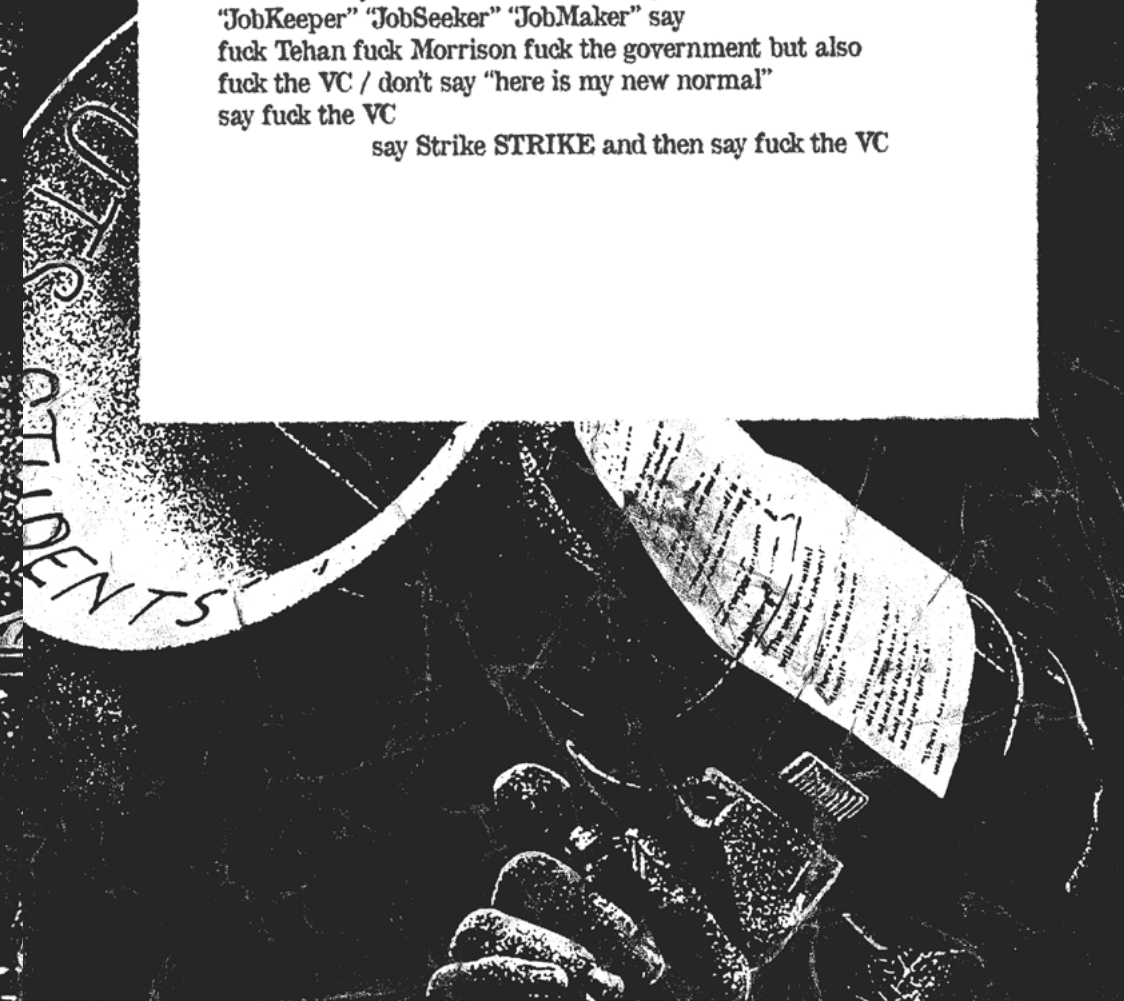
which I had been, but only a little, because of all that. Anyway

then I started listening to us for real, believing

the picket itself to be the sole reason we were creating it

Anonymous

all other words are buried
beneath campus all our faculties are buried
deep beneath campus / don't say "student loading" say
fuck the VC / don't say "happy new building" say fuck the VC
perhaps say "save education" but after that, immediately
after that say fuck the VC / for "hiring freeze" for
"JobKeeper" "JobSeeker" "JobMaker" say
fuck Tehan fuck Morrison fuck the government but also
fuck the VC / don't say "here is my new normal"
say fuck the VC
say Strike STRIKE and then say fuck the VC



Strike: A Nursery Rhyme

(After Sean Bonney)

for "university" say fuck the VC / for
"death by a thousand cuts" say fuck the VC / don't say
"casualisation" don't say "warm bodies" say fuck the VC
for "sandstone" say fuck the VC

for "international intake" for

"vested interests" for "\$1 billion surplus" say fuck the VC
don't say "I am going down like a sunset" don't say
"Zoom" don't say "I am going to share my screen
with you now" say fuck the VC / for "piccolo expertise"
for "blue sky thinking" say fuck the VC
for "austerity moon" for "king tide" say fuck the VC
don't say "course fees" don't say "Liberal party"
say "this wellness program makes me sick" don't say
"pandemic" don't say "departmental head" say fuck the VC
don't say "kombucha" say fuck the VC / for
"the megafires of capital" say fuck the VC / for
"aspirational" say fuck the VC

but as soon as we finished, we started to talk about how

we used to think that the picket was just about how liberatingly banal

being in struggle with someone was

but then you said you'd started to think recently it was more

about the idiocy of thinking we were never in struggle before

when we spent all that energy caring about each other

and you said that you were wondering where

I stood on the question now that I'd been on the picket line

and I was as struck by the question as I was

still stunned that we could casually create such a

good long picket and that we hadn't created it

primarily to solicit appreciation for our creation

so much as to ask each other what we thought about it

now, versus how we thought about it then, and this was

when I knew I wanted to be with us forever.



A Message from the Vice-Chancellor

Toby Fitch

1
Dear _____, in a nuanced way. At the same time
I am writing to you this is in addition to your
with some key information regular annual crisis
disruption. In adjuncting to our management
'new normal' you have shown positive spirit leave.

Some a computer or other compassion device.
students have I am grateful to all those cool
expressed their portly leagues who have re-
folios, company concerns, to ponded rapidly
ensure you will not be able to access to the

questions you are a staff member. I do know
about how this no this is disappointing.
environment is an unsettling We thank you for
tomb assisting us to proctor your being maintaining
online. So please, don't come to camp on us if your

core crisis in many different sways that are specific
through this most to your particular, under-active-
torrenting of chimes and consideration, casual
for understumbling. We are making contract
every effort to really take this into account life.

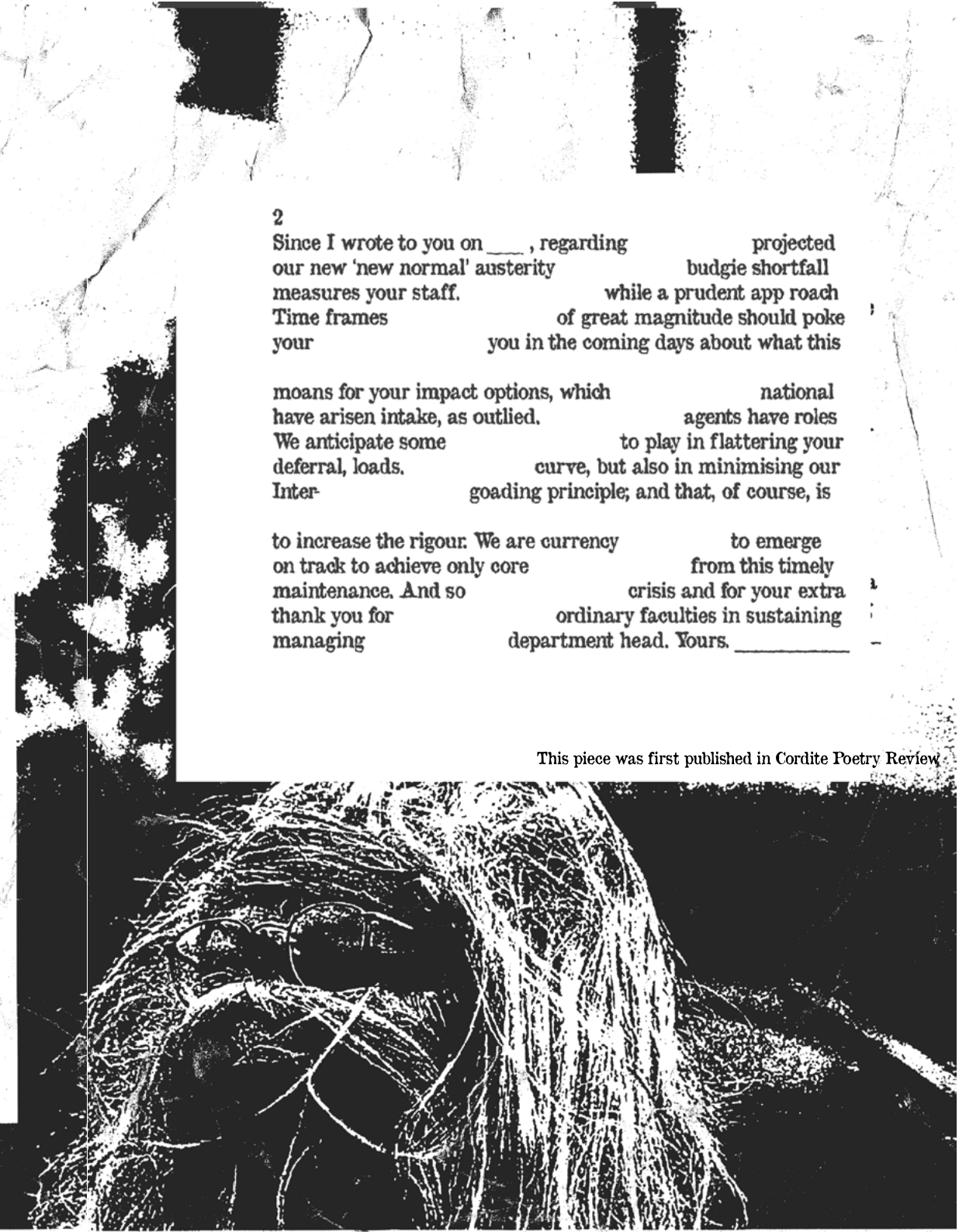
2

Since I wrote to you on _____, regarding projected
our new 'new normal' austerity budgie shortfall
measures your staff. while a prudent approach
Time frames of great magnitude should poke
your you in the coming days about what this

moans for your impact options, which national
have arisen intake, as outlined. agents have roles
We anticipate some to play in flattering your
deferral, loads. curve, but also in minimising our
Inter- goading principle; and that, of course, is

to increase the rigour. We are currency to emerge
on track to achieve only core from this timely
maintenance. And so crisis and for your extra
thank you for ordinary faculties in sustaining
managing department head. Yours. _____

This piece was first published in Cordite Poetry Review



GERMBUTTER 2

The Aerosol Edition

Fred¹ & Flo² and the Germbutter Collective

University of Canberra ¹ORCID: 0000-0001-8132-0310 ²ORCID: 0000-0003-0988-9996



Downloadable publication instructions

There is a separate file for this author which has the imposed pages for a 2-up 20pp booklet.

Print the pages of this file back to back on A4 (or A3) paper using a printer or photocopier. The file is Landscape orientation, and should flip at the short edge. Once printed, fold the bundle in half, short ends together, and press the spine with something firm (handle of a dinner knife, or back of a wooden spoon) to form an A5 (or A4) booklet. Bind by stapling, tying or sewing if desired.

GERMBUTTER 2: THE AEROSOL EDITION

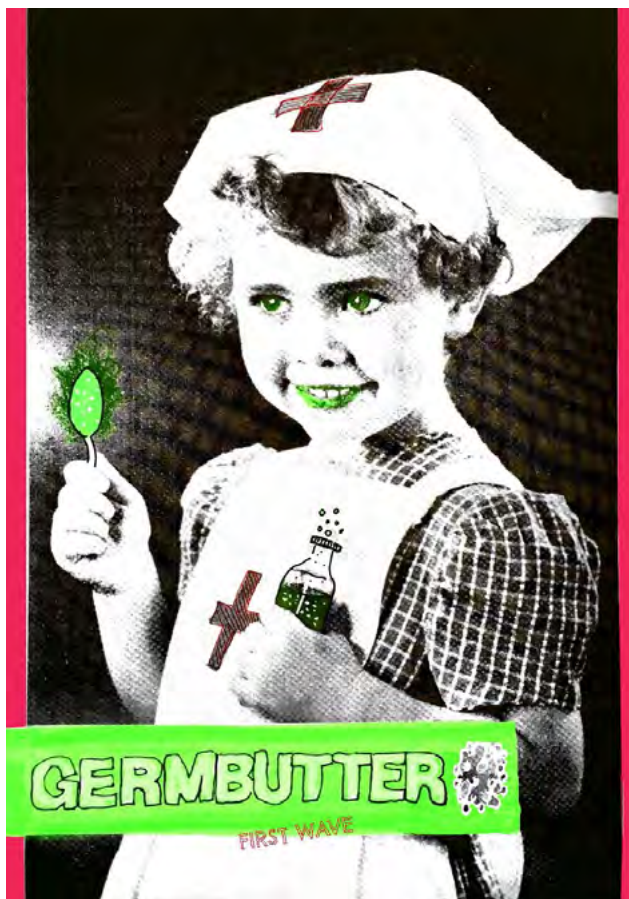
Fred & Flo

Fred & Flo is a publishing collaboration by artist/archaeologist UK Frederick and artist/writer Caren Florance. We are also academics. We recognised each other long ago as fellow gleaners, those who follow and find cultural traces, who *take without taking* (Bize, 2019). Our joint commitment to material and text-making processes has seen us work together over the years, sharing skills such as letterpress, printmaking, cyanotype, and other visual art processes. Our first Fred & Flo zine was made for the 2019 conference of the Heritage of the Air (HOTA) project, and was titled HOT AZ. We sourced a bulk quantity of waxed-paper airline sick bags which we screenprinted with the conference logo and filled with a 12pp photocopied zine and a laminated Conference Emergency Card.

The Germbutter Collective zines started with a *mondegreen*, a misheard word by Fred when listening to an advert for cleaning products in the early days of COVID-19 pandemic. She was revolted by the thought of *germbutter* but it stuck with her because it encapsulated the visceral, sensorial experience of what was unfolding around the world. Flo is always up for a new word, and they started riffing. We use humour to engage and foreground the confusion and fear we were/are witnessing on a daily level, especially from people in positions of power.

Germbutter 1: First Wave (2020) ⁽¹⁾ was 16 pages of green-tinged horror at methods of transmission (pens, cash, deliveries, phone screens), ways to stay sane in lockdown (sourdough, walks, growing a beard) and explorations of the surprising joy of solitude. We invited two fellow artists

– Saskia Haalebos and Nicci Haynes – to collaborate with us: it felt like an act of rebellion to socialise on the pages. Again, we housed the zine in a stamped airline sickbag, sealed with a Coronavirus germ sticker. Enclosed within the bag was a germ badge, that people might wear for fun or maybe to signal their status ('Back off! I'm contagious'). The badge also called into question the mystical and non-transparent symbolism worn by authority. Can anyone tell us what those different coloured circles that 'Our Glad' (Gladys Berejiklian) wore on her lapel at the press conference each day stood for? And in a world of circulating visualisations of the 'bad green mofo' the Germbutter badges were our very own imagining of what the virus might look like.



¹ Cover, *Germbutter: First Wave* (2020). The shape on the RHS of the title is our virus image, which featured on the badges.

We continued to pay keen attention to the visual and linguistic languages of the COVID-19 era as it rolled out. Flo produced a risograph-printed artist book called *C:/Ovid: Changing to Survive* (Florance 2022) (2), which is an index format, collating text gleaned from news sources, social media, medical reports and personal experience. Fred started the *Atlas of Everyday X project* (@Atlas_EverydayX) which hunted and gathered the various COVID-19 social distancing floor-markers springing up everywhere and which are now disappearing (3). She also collected examples of the new language that has emerged, such as 'Covid normal', 'covidiot', and 'R number' (Frederick 2023).

Germbutter 2: Aerosol Edition is newly minted in 2023, but has been in production for various reasons since 2021 and that second pandemic year remains its focus. It intended to track the changes that the second wave wrought when it hit our shores, most notably the (at last) wide-scale recognition that the virus was transmitted largely through aerosol particles. Alongside this development we observed the emergence of not one but several vaccines and a widespread public health campaign to inoculate the population. In response we added a third collaborator, Byrd, a local street artist and master of the aerosol can, who found himself producing floor stickers to indicate distancing measures for various art events. In this edition we moved outwards from home isolation: social distancing, the weirdness of public health announcements and statistics, toilet door graffiti, the horror of constant injection visuals, and the evolution of the COVID-19 virus visualisations, which changed colour and shape constantly as needed by the respective positive or negative news message.





3 Sickbag and complimentary pens, *Germbutter 2: Aerosol Edition* (2023).

For this Axon issue, we offer *Germbutter 2* as a digital file configured to print out on a home printer or a work photocopier (or any other print provider). However, zines are not digital natives. They are meant to be printed cheaply and enjoyed for all their flaws. The initial material edition of 100 copies is a little bit special, with a handset letterpress-printed cover (reproduced in the file) and the booklet is housed in a spray-painted airplane sickbag along with a real biro pen altered to look like it has a cartoonish blob of green goop on it. When that edition is gone, the zine will mutate to a simple photocopy, like the virus that inspired it.

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Florance C 2022 'Changing to Survive: Piscator Press', *Imprint: The Quarterly Journal of the Print Council of Australia* 57:4 Summer 2022: 26–2

Frederick UK 2023 'Everyday Signs in Exceptional Times: The short life of @Atlas_Everyday_X', in R Kiddey and WR Caraher (eds) *Archaeology as Festival Virtual wanderings through festivalCHAT during Covid-19*, pp 35–48 Oxford: BAR International.

About the authors

Fred (UK Frederick) is a visual artist who likes to explore and remake things that already exist in the world, through photomedia, printmaking and video. As an archaeologist who has worked at the Sydney Quarantine Station, she has spent many hours thinking about disease, mortality and the commemoration of life interrupted.

Flo (Caren Florance) plays with text in many different ways: through visual art, writing and creative publishing. She's particularly interested in abstraction and text as drawing, believing that not everything has to make sense to make sense. She loved being socially distanced.

Fred & Flo 2021

*UK FREDERICK & CAREN FLORANCE, with
Nicci Haynes, Saskia Haalebos & Byrd.*

THIS ISSUE WAS SUPPORTED BY THE FAD CCCR, UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

GERM
BUTTER

SECOND WAVE

▶▶▶ NOW IN AEROSOL FORM! ▶▶▶

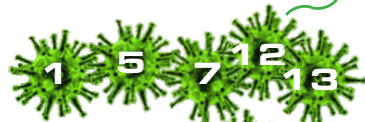


Germbutter 2 2021 *

spreading good vibes
in dark times

@atlas_everyday_x

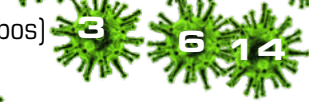
Fred (UK Frederick)
@uk_frederick



Flo (Caren Florance)
@ampersandduck



SasBos (Saskia Haalebos)
@sasss_bos



Nicci (Haynes)
@niccihaynes



Byrd Meltdown
@byrdeined



* produced in Canberra and Bega in 2023

**WELCOME TO THE FUTURE OF THE PAST
WHERE WE PRESENT YOU WITH OUR 2021.
THIS MEANS YOU NEED TO REMEMBER THE
THINGS YOU WANT TO FORGET... BECAUSE
ITS NOT OVER YET. THANKS, CAPITALISM.**

Yep, stay home, lose work, apply for the pandemic payment, get denied and get kicked out for not being able

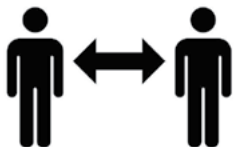


**Relax, your future is in
the hands of Nashy Cab!**

thousands of years. News flash -
earing COVID vaccine injuries do you
eir own informed decisions about
ffer that we rely on you to do the
the same normal we once had.
people on how to behave responsi-
Royal Commission into the Covid
the people who didn't follow it.
ted had my booster, time to get in
e isolate until one tests negative?
tly had covid. Tested positive on
other day, if you've been jabbed
ed into 2 years BUT DID YOU
ron strains... several of my friends
ves a lot to be answered. the
ur house. No one else caught it.
om her 4yr Id who caught it at
have to stay home until Christmas,
a mask can prevent hayfever
ddler over a piece of fabric? How
been vaccinated. Even when they
I suppose Covid can be transmit-
so you can say some monumen-
ereotypes, such as covid dangers
do they have in what industries,
r people?all you need to know is
g from home due to lock downs.
ernment will not allow medical
ork for...
all sue our employers if we con-
to get food or essential services.
ole settings but blame it on work
that excuse won't work! I have
o. It's just another glaring piece of
out health they would be allowing
s also stopped the job. More peo-
SW and AUS plan on moving on
day when we all grow gills and live
mask and use hand sanitizer. Had 4
place, been in hospital twice not
So for these fools who think
it's funny, hope you get really sick and see what its really like. Yes it's Awful I've been sick for 11 days so far
not something to be made fun of.Thankyou. I'm immune compromised too. Thankyou for being one of the rare
few who careimmune compromised alright. Im surprised your even alive after 1 dotshots!
aren't you a nasty person.they're everywhere. Totally changed my opinion
Health



A PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE
SHARING ESSENTIAL INFORMATION WITH
OUR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COMMUNITIES



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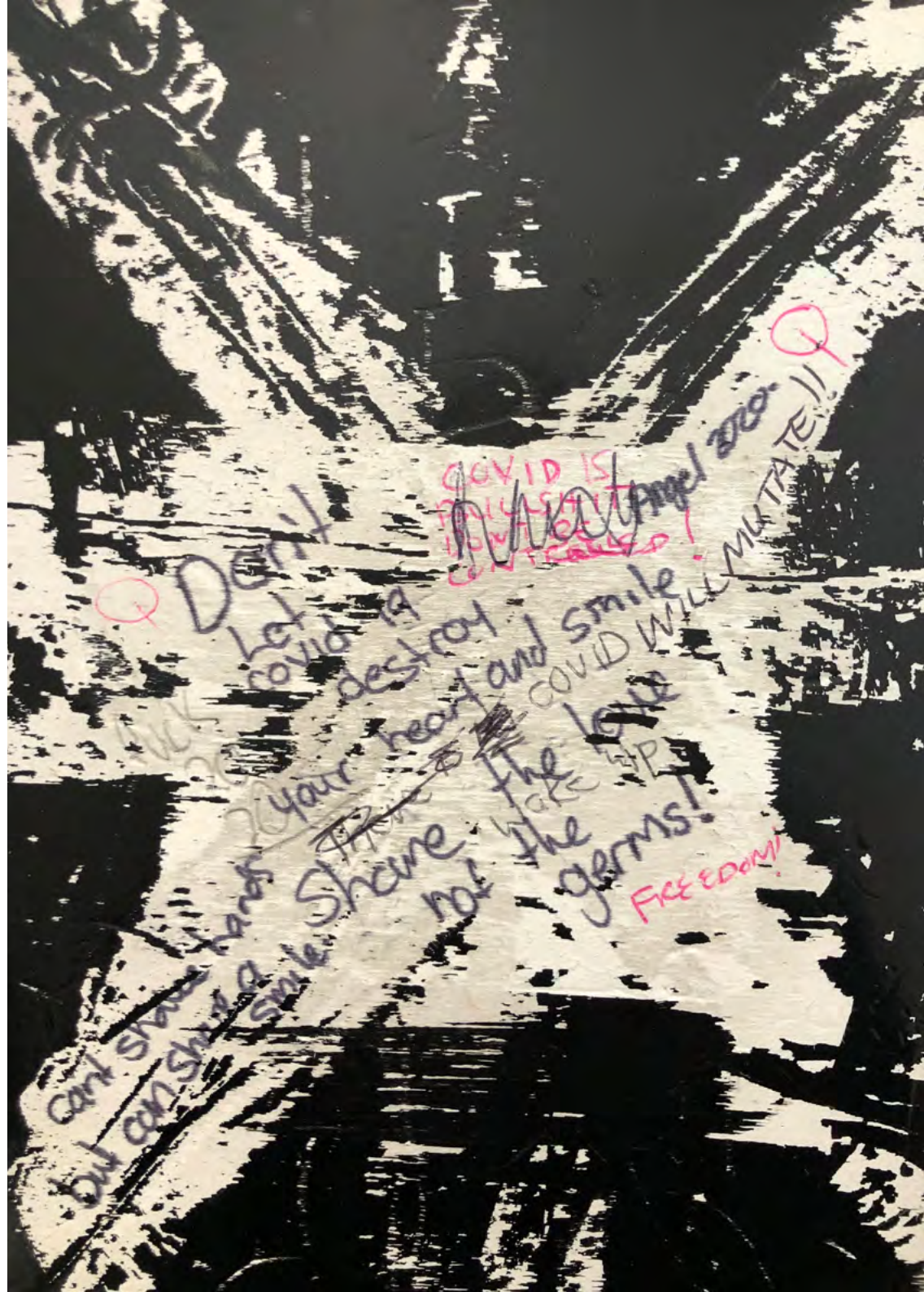


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Bralvaoil lay u zyhl énceralt.

OEL NGATI KAMEIE



SELF ISOLATE

should that just be isolate?

FULLY VACCINATED

should that just be vaccinated?

NEW NORMAL

have you given up?

FACE MASK

is there a dick mask?

SUPER SPREADER

tee hee

To Do: 2021

WFH

lie on the floor

eat toast

shower

sleep all night

eat toast

go for a walk

try to make art

try again...

try again...

write nan a letter

drink wine

eat toast



144

DICTIONARY DIRECTIVE

<https://www.provid19.theseating.com.theyusedto/ac/statusofthefunds/walden>

The AZT is enough down

I leave you home first and reasons. [Find out more.](#)

And they see tea government logo | could then 19

Contact us

[Home](#) > [and I think the status and response](#) > [to walk down the me a CD](#)

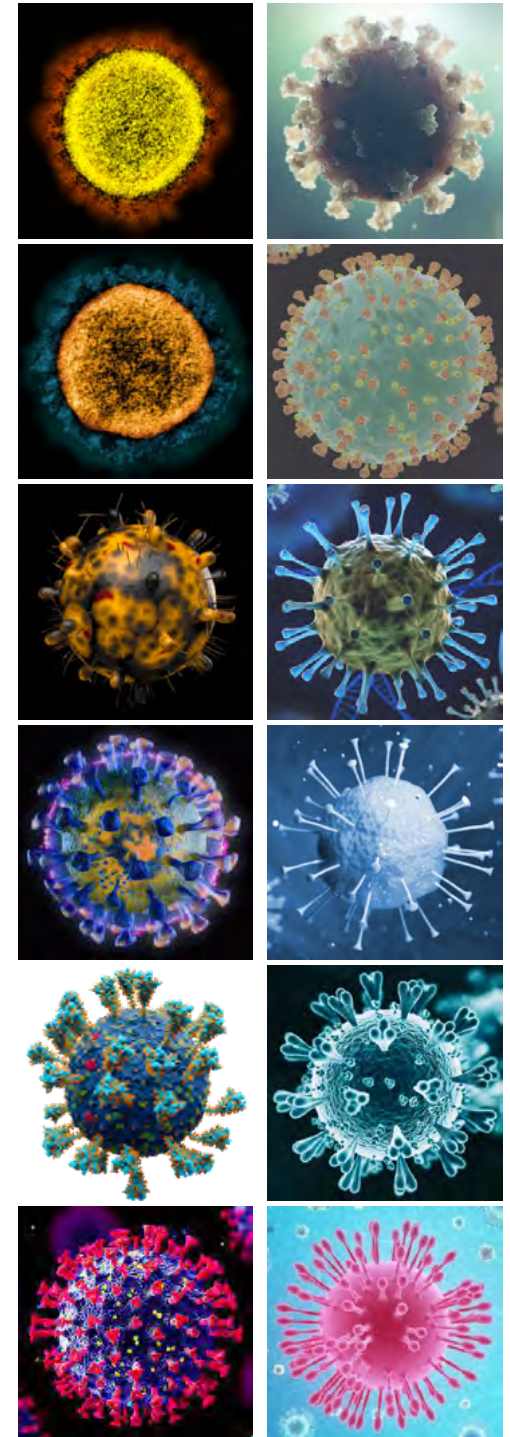
One day of the union seat

On since page

- Login restrictions
- Essential providers
- A sensual work is
- Residual health providers
- Professions fourth
- Love him if the teams
- Reporting non compliance

The AZT is currently in the offense and Ken behring's of the house to stay at home to assist in our response to positive cases of provid 19 in the Yangtze to a path to thee.

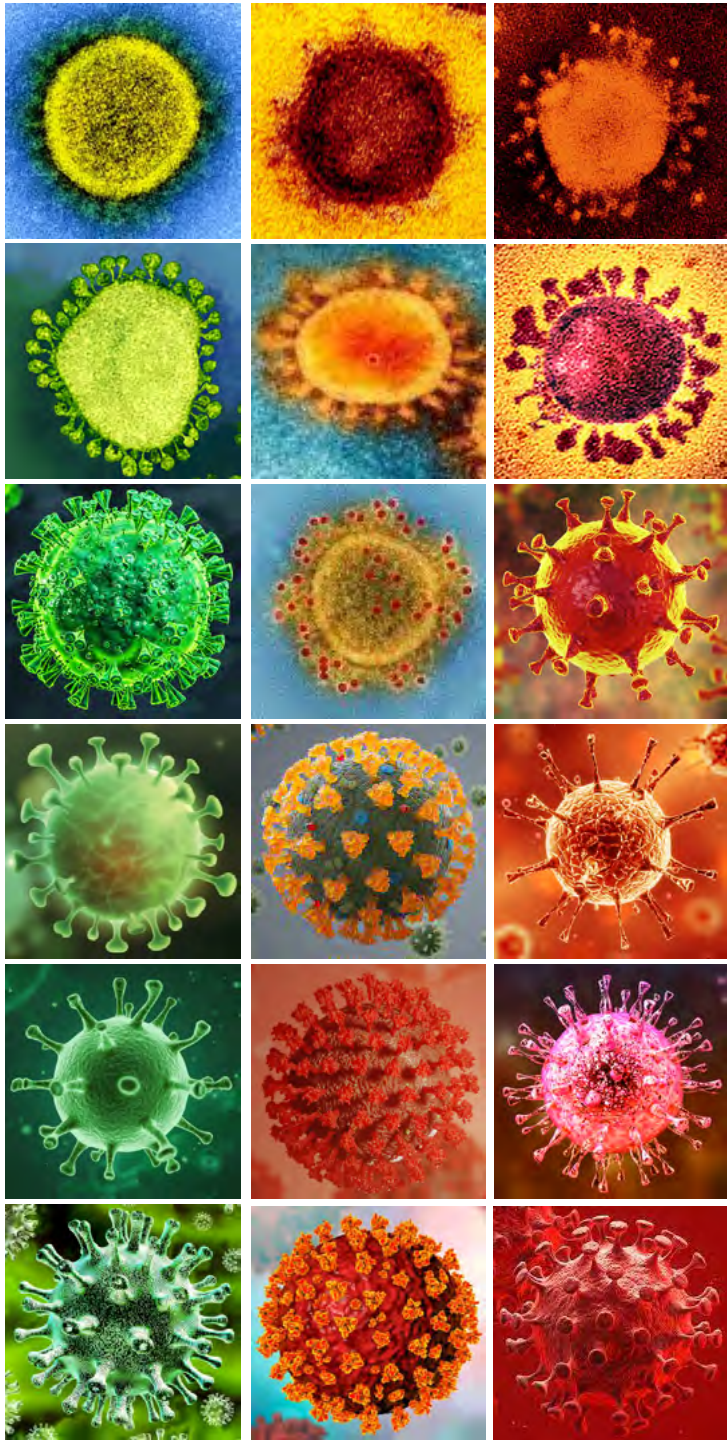
COLOUR THEORY



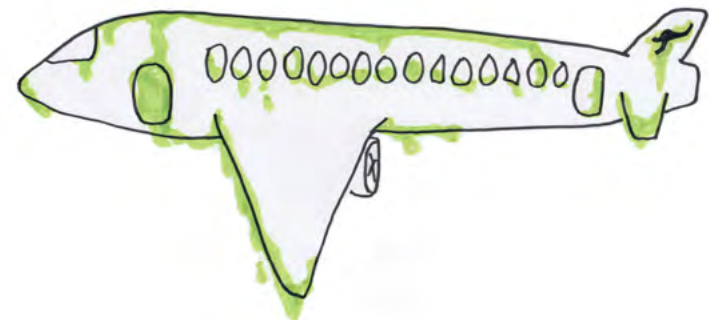
Was this page helpful?

Yes

No



GERM BUTTER IS:



Recovery Road Map





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DOI: 10.54375/001/dxrczqn13f
Keywords: Visual Poetry, First Nations,
Colonisation, Alternate History,

COMPLICIT

A Visual History of 'Australia' Since Invasion

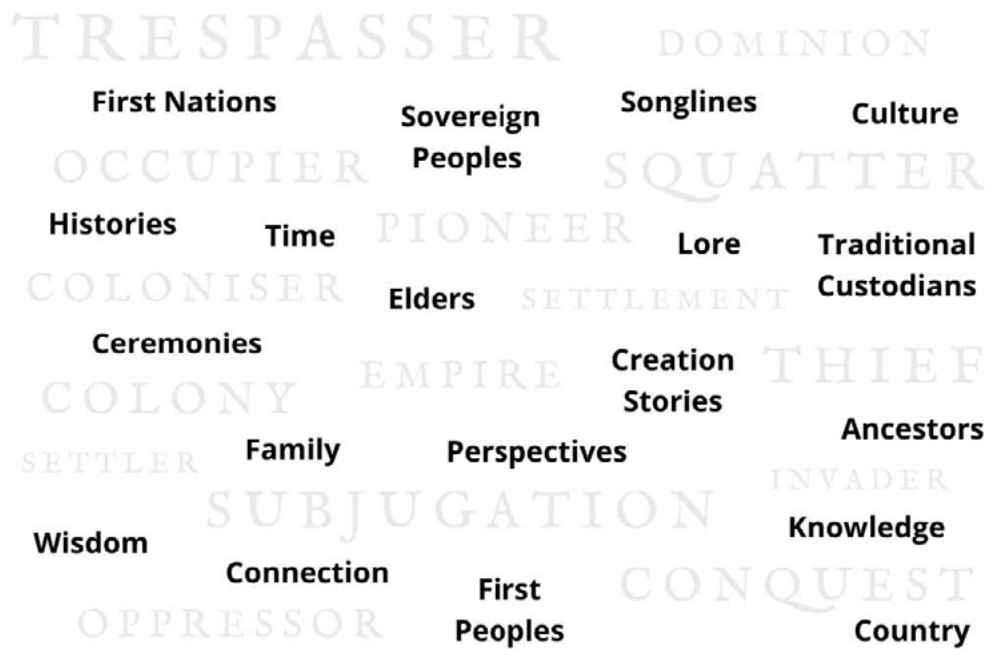
Indrani Perera

Content warning: colonisation, appropriation, exploitation & violence.

COMPLICIT

Indrani Perera

Chapter 1: Invasion



Invaders & First Nations: design notes

The light grey text (#e9e9e9) represents invaders and colonisers who have subjugated the land and its people since 'discovery'. The decorative lines and tapers of the IM Fell English SC serif font represents the lies and deceptions practiced by settlers in order to justify the theft, massacre and atrocities they committed in the name of Empire.

The black text (#000000) represents sovereign First Nations people who have maintained cultural traditions in the face of oppression. The Open Sans font is solid and without artifice. It refers specifically in this instance to Indigenous peoples of so-called 'Australia' but includes all First Nations people of the planet.

Chapter 2: Theft



Materials & Landforms: design notes

Light grey words (#a6a6a6) represent construction materials made by mining, logging and farming the land using invasive and destructive practices. The Alfa Slab One font represents the weight of all these materials and practices choking the land.

A variety of different shades of brown ranging from tan (#e0b15e) through to brown (#ad795b, #c2b19c) and red brown (#ce8458) represent different landforms and elements of the geosphere. The Open Sans font emphasises the organic nature of these features.

Chapter 3: Colonisation

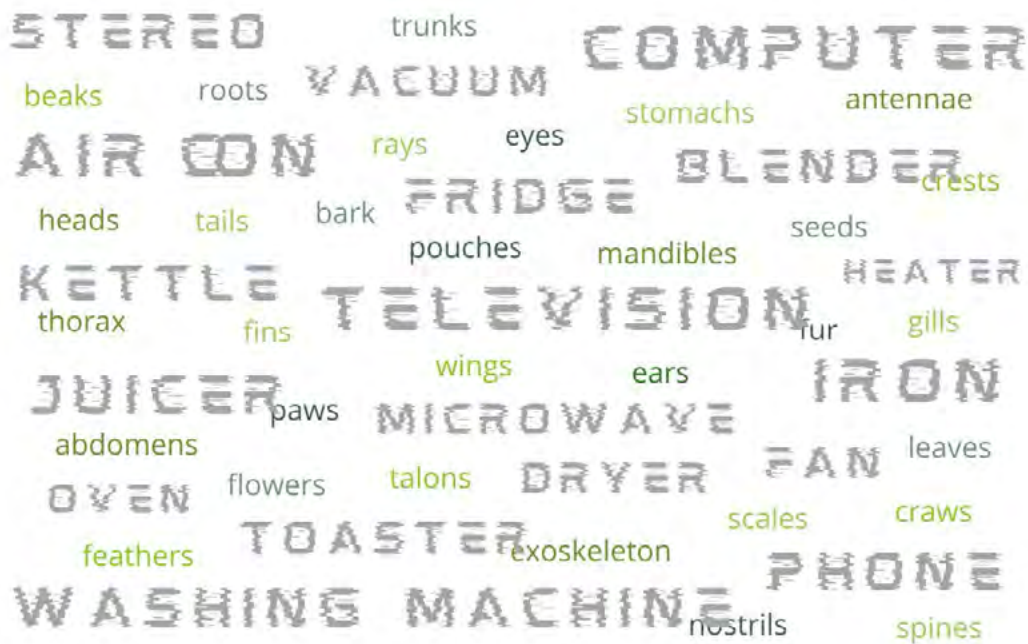


Buildings and Bodies: design notes

The light grey text (#8e99a2, #626262) refers to drab exteriors of manmade structures that smother the surface of so-called Australia, choking fertile floodplains and poisoning rivers. The different fonts deployed for the buildings (Aileron Thin, Alegreya Sans Thin, Alta Light, Barlow Thin, Cooper Hewitt Thin, Fira Sans Thin, Overpass Thin, Quark Thin and TT Runs Thin) refer to the multiplicity and duplicity of dwellings built without permission on stolen land. All these structures are inhabited by people who live on First Nations' land without permission or recompense to the Traditional Custodians of the Land.

The various red coloured words (#FF5C5C, #c74375, #d3494e, #8a0303) refer to the blood shed to dispossess First Nations Australians of their Country. Different shades of red have been used to represent different parts of the human body. The heaviness of the Coco Gothic Fat font emphasises the extent of the massacres that occurred during invasion and colonisation and represent the blood that is continuing to be shed.

Chapter 4: Exploitation



Technology and Organisms: design notes

The light grey words in this final chapter (#a6a6a6) are a catalogue of electrical appliances that can be found in Australian households. These ubiquitous gadgets are taken for granted by their owners as is the cost to the planet for making and disposing of them in landfill. The font Mokoto Glitch 1 has been used to represent the static and disconnection caused by technology designed to connect and support humanity.

In contrast, the sans serif words in shades of green (#6e9277, #87cb28, #385b4f, #9dcd5a, #68902b) are being obscured by the technology that seeks to control or eradicate the natural world. In this world purview, nature is there to be exploited by humanity and the cycle of endless growth is never questioned. The green words represent different parts of plants, birds, animals, fish and insects and are displayed in Open Sans.

Contextual Statement

This visual history of 'Australia' seeks to provide an alternative to the 'official' history of this land.

Professor Manning Clarke's *A History of Australia* is a work that focuses on the psychological struggles of 'key' European men. It's a work that ignores 80,000 years of Indigenous history and begins with white invasion. History is written by the winner or in this case, the oppressor. It deletes the history of bloody massacres, violent protests, stolen children and deaths in custody which still occur today in spite of protests, petitions and a Royal Commission.

In comparison, this poem is a concise, four-volume visual history that tells an alternative version of the events on this continent since the invasion and theft of land at the hands of the colonial British Empire. One page is given to each of the four chapters in this land's history since invasion — Chapter 1: Invasion, Chapter 2: Theft, Chapter 3: Colonisation and Chapter 4: Exploitation. It is a story that continues to play out in countries and histories across the world.

The notes below the poem-images allow the reader to look beneath the surface of the poem and see the layers of meaning embedded in the physical forms of the words themselves. These words move beyond their semantic definitions and take on a different sort of life with their physical forms becoming objects that speak as well as vehicles that convey meaning. Their fonts, colours, weights and so on speak to the reader, adding to the conversation. Each choice was deliberate — used to emphasise a point, to add layers to the poem or send a message.

Making the words solid, giving them colour, emphasising the negative space they create and exploring the relationship between them was a dance of design. The letters of the poem carve and mould the landscape of the page like rivers and mountains as they create a topography of typography. Texture too was important as was static and blood and technology and soil. All these and more were absorbed by the letters as fonts were chosen, serif and sans serif debated. Which font could best represent the proud heritage of Indigenous Australians? Who were the first invaders and how were they seen? What happens when the words collide? Using capitals became a deliberate choice, a statement, an act of revision.

What is the history of a country and who gets to tell it? *Complicit: A Visual History of 'Australia' Since Invasion* is one way to attempt to answer these questions, providing an alternative way of seeing by using text as art.

Works Cited

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About the author

Indrani Perera is a Sri Lankan/German/Australian poet living on unceded Wurrundjeri Country in Naarm (Melbourne, Australia). Her poetry has appeared in journals in Australia, India and the USA including *Burrow*, *Cordite*, *Eye to the Telescope*, *More Than Melanin*, *Teesta Review* and *The Victorian Writer* and been anthologised by Geelong Writers Inc, Girls on Key, Ginninderra Press and WA Poets Inc. She has been shortlisted for the Jean Stone Award and the Nillumbik Prize and she is the author of the poetry collections *Defenestration* and *pas de deux*. You can find her at www.indraniperera.com.



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Keywords: Poetry, Visual Art, Ekphrasis,
Collaboration

DECLARATIONS

Peter Robinson¹, Andrew McDonald, Peter Swaab²

¹*Reading*, ORCID: 0000-0002-7903-5438, ²*UCL*, ORCID: 0000-0002-7772-7027

DECLARATIONS

Peter Robinson (poetry), Andrew McDonald (artwork), Peter Swaab (writing)





2

Artefactual

The artist comes like a shaman of shame
draping his body in sackcloth, a smock
or – for heaven's sake – hospital robe.

He's daubing his torso in a tattoo performance
to act out abjection compacted of ash-dust
smeared on a face, and foetal in corners
of industrial brick or, descending a staircase,
puts fashionable chic in our and its place.

You see, self-recovery needs the displacement,
us moved not to shun this shaman of shame.
Oh no, we face up to the very thing done.



3

Little Bestiary

Unicorns, the fauns and fauna,
your animal house or wildlife park
contains the 'words poured over swallows'
in crimson on one canvas . . .

There's Pegasus, the wonder horse,
winged lions, prancing postures,
a family pet's dysmorphia
ghosting othered lives . . .

Then see how their expressive features
of shoulder, hip, and fledgling wing
turn on a slender birdman falling
into more *lits et ratures!*

It's like they pitied us, your creatures,
our choices and a consciousness
of body image, fates, familiars,
hoofed creature comforts at a door!



4

Headphone Head

Look, headphone head, your eyes
caught listening in to some emotion
fed back as the sounds of others
loudly in a background tone,
but do they help you recognize
more enchanted, humdrum stuff
passing like a possible love
or scare it off with that blank stare?



5

Plastic Veronica

A creased, black plastic sheet that has picked up some cream and pink from palette or floor gestalts as two smudged ovals.

I see them taped to the studio wall's
brickwork, Rorschach behaviours,
your makeshift, chance materials
making faces like a saviour's.



6

Face in a Predicament

Dreaming changes or the fact of change,
imaginary person, as most of us are,
you're emerging from dark forest.
Balder, troubled, haunted mask,
the vines and tendrils all about you
drop back behind their darkness
or flare out as space opens, closes,
between a figure and its ground.



7

South Pacific Rim

It's a migratory currency conversion
draws your heart out taut between
two countries, like a Mansfield
in Beauchamp Lodge at Little Venice . . .

But what would your aversion
be to the slick? a South Pacific
ethos, an aesthetic impulse
carried through, the visual gesture
rendering *wabi-sabi yugen*
through nothing that's not casual?

In this roughness, unrefined,
your *art brut*, *arte povera*
revels in whatever a
work of yours reveals it has to find . . .



Image details

- 1 Andrew McDonald, 'Wings Are Possible', 2019, 105 x 200 x 85 mm, Ceramic, glaze, oil paint, enamel paint
- 2 'Always Water', Photo of performance by Andrew McDonald taken by Ingeun Kim, 2009
- 3 Andrew McDonald, 'Wings Are Possible' (back), 2019, 105 x 200 x 85mm, Ceramic, glaze, oil paint, enamel paint
- 4 Andrew McDonald, 'Headphone Head', 2018, 250 x 190 mm, Acrylic on canvas
- 5 Andrew McDonald, 'Paint on Plastic', 2018, 340 x 360 mm (approx), Acrylic on plastic bin bag
- 6 Andrew McDonald, 'After Joey Arias', 2019, 405 x 505 mm, Acrylic on canvas
- 7 Andrew McDonald, 'Octopus', 2019, 130 x 80 x 70 mm, Ceramic, glaze, oil paint
- 8 Andrew McDonald, 'Secret Garden' (wearable painting), 2007, 1250 x 590 mm, Acrylic paint and parcel tape on newspaper

Contextual statement: Peter Swaab

Declarations is a collaboration between a British poet who has spent long periods in Japan and Italy and a New Zealand painter now living in London. Both are versatile creative artists. Peter Robinson is a prolific poet whose *Collected Poems 1976–2016* was published by Shearsman Press in 2017. He has also written novels and short stories and several volumes of literary criticism, and in his early years he was a serious amateur painter. Andrew McDonald, who has recently changed pronouns to 'they', also has several strings to their bow, working mainly as a painter and performance artist and sometimes as a maker of ceramics and of fashion textiles. They have been friends for twenty years and interested admirers of each other's work. This is their second collaboration, after the pamphlet *Ekphrastic Marriage* (Pine Wave Press, 2009).

Peter Robinson, like Andrew McDonald, has moved between cultures. Some of his previous collaborations have taken the form of translations, especially of the Italian poets who have mattered most to him, Vittorio Sereni and Luciano Erba. He has also translated a range of Japanese poetry. His recent book *Bonjour Mr Inshaw* (2020) is a collaboration with the painter David Inshaw, another kind of transpositional dialogue in which, as in *Declarations*, the poet's words are presented alongside the artist's works.

Several of the images in *Declarations* come from Andrew McDonald's exhibition **Declarations: Paintings and Sculptures**, which took place in Matakana, Auckland, at the Vivian Gallery (now the Scott Lawrie Gallery) in August–October 2019. In their artist's statement for the exhibition McDonald described their background and some of their later paths: 'I was born and raised in Northland, a farmer's son from New Zealand who grew up queer in a conservative rural community. Since 1986 I have been living, studying and working in London. Having danced with underground art collectives, made hats for fashion shows in Paris and London, and practised painting and performance art for the last twenty years I use many different skills to make the work that expresses best how I feel about being a human now.'

A photo from one of McDonald's performance pieces, 'Always Water', stands beside the first of the poems, 'Artefactual'. 'In performance', McDonald explains, 'I make and paint dresses, masks and wigs that enable an embodiment of fluidity of identity and the self. I want viewers to be struck by the mysterious gap between the odd things they see and what they can infer as causes and origins.' Robinson's poem finds a further role for the viewers of this performance, asking that they should be 'moved not to shun this shaman of shame', an acceptance that's reparative in witness to a spectacle that's touched by magic.

Declarations continues with images of McDonald's ceramic animal figures, a 'Little Bestiary' as Robinson calls it, an animal house of wondrous and unlikely life-forms. McDonald writes that 'the ceramic models of my animal figures grow and evolve into impossible beings that become at times amorphous. They also become entangled in objects, sometimes stars, that they seem to have swum into. Sometimes I have chosen to damage and then re-form the figures, highlighting the question of wholeness and integrity.' 'It's like they pitied us, your creatures', Robinson concludes, switching the perspective from us looking curiously at the strange figures to them looking kindly back on us.

Other paintings place stylized human heads in tangled landscapes of vine and tendril or against abstract-coloured backgrounds. McDonald calls these 'floating faces' and writes that 'In moving the faces around the canvas I am experimenting with elusive ideas around our relationship to our own feelings and sense of being. In the paintings I negotiate the meeting of edges to push elements forward or draw them back into an ambiguous space. They suggest in-between states, thresholds and transitions that we think no one else knows about, possibilities of unbounded identity.'

That's what the artist says about themselves. The poems evoke the works and think through them into what went into their making. Robinson sees in them a marriage of the humdrum and the far-reaching, a vulnerability that can be redemptive, a deliberate embrace of roughness and shunning of the slick, points of transition in a vital process. Phrases of French and Italian in his final lines bring European traditions into this space that's an Anglo-New Zealand one but frontier-less too: 'your *art brut, arte povera* | revels in whatever a | work of yours reveals it has to find . . . '.

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Robinson, P 2017 *Collected Poems 1976–2016*. UK: Shearsman Books.

Robinson, P 2020 *Bonjour Mr Inshaw*. UK: Two Rivers Press

Robinson, P and A McDonald 2009 *Ekphrastic Marriage*. Reading: Pine Wave Press.

About the authors

Andrew McDonald is a New Zealand artist, long resident in the UK, who has exhibited in both their home and adopted countries. They have a studio at The Chocolate Factory in Stoke Newington, London. Peter Robinson's many books include volumes of poetry and translation for some of which he has been awarded the Cheltenham Prize, the John Florio Prize and two PBS Recommendations. Peter Swaab is Professor of English Literature at University College London. He has published widely on William Wordsworth, Edward Lear, and Sylvia Townsend Warner, as well as a monograph about the movie *Bringing Up Baby*.

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Keywords: Essay, Artist's Book, Petr Herel,
Visual Interpretation of Text, Semiotics,
Experiential Analysis

ON VIEWING WORDS

Ella Morrison

ORCID: 0000-0001-9971-2451

Abstract

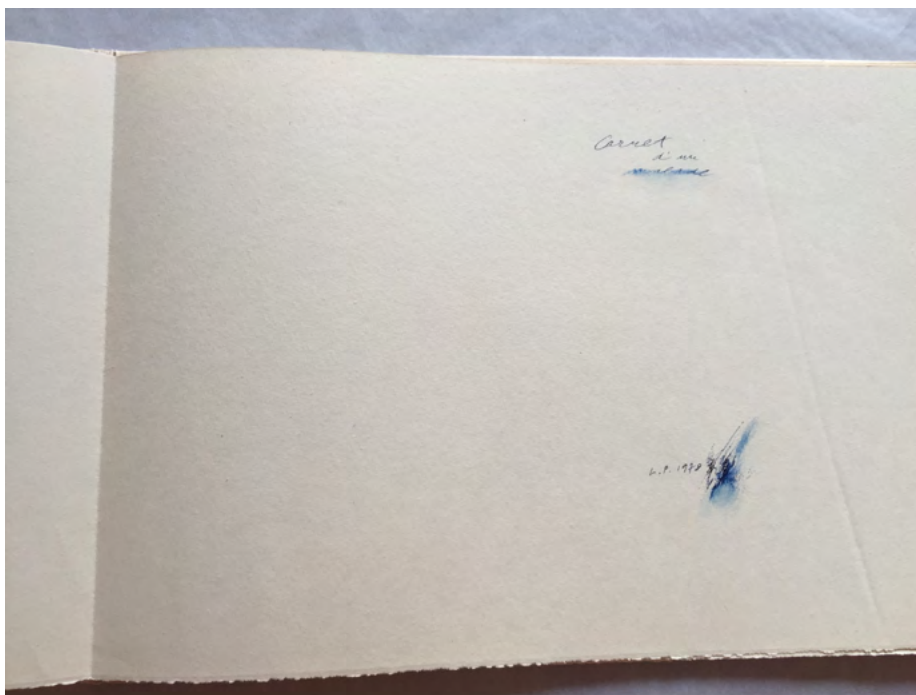
In this paper I will argue the value to be found in the visual analysis of text, drawing upon the artists' books of Czech-born Australian artist Petr Herel (1943-2022) as case study. A seminal figure in the development and dissemination of the artist's book in Australia, the complexity of Herel's work lies in part through his use of text that conveys meaning without necessarily being conventionally 'read'. This paper takes concepts rooted in traditional and conventionally rigid semiotic frameworks, including the relationship between text and context and the polysemy of meaning, and applies them in a flexible and contemporary approach that facilitates new visual analyses of the text present in Herel's books. The artist's use of unfamiliar alphabets, familiar alphabets and unknowable alphabets calls for a new iteration of analysis that encourages and celebrates visual meaning(s) from text.

ON VIEWING WORDS

Ella Morrison

The title page of Petr Herel's *Carnet d'un Malade* (1979) is largely vacant (1). The page, oriented in landscape, is overwhelmingly white. This immediately draws my eye to the handwritten text nearing the upper right-hand corner. Written in dark blue ink is the book's title, which translates to 'notebook of a sickly person'. My eyes follow the swooping lines of the handwriting, noting the large slopes and angles created within such small forms. The word *malade*, written on its own line, is smudged. The blue ink becomes hazy, as if the word has been covered by a thin sheet, or rests just under an uppermost layer of the paper itself. The word appears to have been smudged in one action, suggesting the movement of a damp finger. The word bleeds out into the area around it. *Malade* is disintegrating, falling apart, slowly decaying, and losing its physical presence, as might the sickly person it describes. This extension out into the page makes what was before vacant now an important space that supports these words—white becomes an extension of blue. Focusing on this white mass, an embossed diagonal line appears, leading my eye from the title to the text below that notes the date. Following this more conventional inscription is an unexpected form: an ambiguous shape that is also bleeding. A book is supposed to communicate clear meaning, to be readable. Instead, on the very first page of this artist's book, Herel has left me staring into a void.

The artists' books of Czech-born Australian artist Petr Herel (1943–2022) are complex, challenging, and wondrous objects. They have been largely neglected by previous art historical discourse. Current scholarship on the artist's book is vague and contradictory, with specific analyses unable to articulate the subjective and experiential encounter evoked by Herel's work in hand. In response, this paper will present a new manner to critically engage with the challenging nature of the artist's book, specifically examining the visual presence of text. Underlying this new approach is my definition of the artist's book as aberrant object. To be



1 Petr Herel, *Carnet d'un Malade*, 1978, one of two unique impressions, artist's collection, Melbourne.

aberrant is to 'depart from an accepted standard' (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2017). The aberrant object can be understood as one 'created through displacement' (Heide Museum of Modern Art 1994: 23). It is an object removed from its original context, re-examined to create a new entity. In the case of Herel's work, the conventional, recognisable codex is transformed into a holistic art object. Text transforms from having a sole literary purpose to an expansive literal and visual one. I argue that the attribution of aberrance is not a pejorative, but a positive term that casts new light on why the artist's book sits so uncomfortably in art historical discourse and opens a door to analytical possibility.

A visual examination of the textual presence in Herel's books emphasises the artist's book as complex, aberrant object—this text conveys meaning without being conventionally read. Using the methodological framework of semiology for such analysis might be unexpected, considering its conventional focus on the communication of semantic meaning. Certainly, using a semiological lens to emphasise not the semantic significance of text but its visual impact is an innovative approach. However, ideas rooted in semiology including the relationship between text and context and the 'polysemy of meaning' can both be applied in a new manner to analyse the text in Herel's books. Notably, Herel's use of different languages demonstrates the expansive potential of this aesthetic analysis of language—unfamiliar alphabets, familiar alphabets, and, in the case of this polyglot artist, unknowable alphabets (I acknowledge that not every reader will find the same languages familiar and unfamiliar, but my Anglophone perspective demonstrated in this paper can be extended to apply to those with different linguistic backgrounds). I propose a new iteration of semiotics inspired by Herel's aberrant work that generates a visual meaning from text.

The application of semiotics to the formal analysis of text in the artist's book is a complex process that challenges traditional semiotic theory. Previously, semiotics has worked to uncover positivistic knowledge according to an agreed relationship between three key components: sign, system, and context (Crow 2010: 14). For founding theorists Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), semiotics presented a rigidly structuralist approach to verbal linguistics (Saint-Martin 1990: 1). Language was analysed using a methodical, scientific model—particular signs working together to form semantic understanding. It is this attitude of scientific positivism that has previously made the application of semiotics to visual material an awkward one. This kind of scientific rigidity proves to be counterproductive in the discussion of subjective creation, as demonstrated by previous attempts to reduce works of art down to key visual variables. For example, though acknowledging the problems of systematic analysis when applying semiotics to visual art, Saint-Martin then continues to attempt to create an ultimate list of key visual elements. These elements, including the likes of 'coloreme' (deemed the basic unit of visual language; the focal point), 'chromatic poles', and 'vectorality' already reflect focuses of formal analysis and create an exclusive, esoteric, and unwelcoming vocabulary (*ibid.*).

The artist's book demands a reassessment of the semiotic preoccupation with 'cracking the code' in art history, especially in those works including text. Historic examples of 'success' from semantic translation in linguistics, such as the solution of the Rosetta Stone and Linear B, focus on their original significance as official, social documents, and do not expand to acknowledge the visual impact of the texts. Inscribed with a message written in hieroglyphics, demotic, and Greek, the Rosetta Stone is celebrated as a key cipher in the modern understanding of ancient Egyptian culture and language (The British Museum 2022). The decipherment of Linear B is similarly celebrated for the information it communicates about ancient society. As the conventional

book might be overlooked as an everyday, household object rather than an art object, so too have these examples been primarily valued for the information they communicate. In these two cases, a feeling of completion or understanding is achieved by semantic solution. Herel's use of untranslatable signs, and the combined languages that form an aesthetic presence in his work, question the very nature of 'understanding' text in art history. Herel presents a case study of work involving text and language that does not aim to be semantically comprehensible. Instead, Herel's books defy previous semiotic fixation by codifying both semantic and visual language, and demand a new iteration of what Jan Mukařovský refers to as 'visually based sign analysis' (1976: 258).

Text and Context

The relationship between text and context in semiotics challenges the interpretation of text in the artist's book. In their seminal publication *Semiotics and Art History* (1991), Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson interrogate the impact context has upon text, and whether the two are as distinct as traditional semiotics would suggest:

. . . the context in which the work of art is placed is in fact being generated out of the work itself . . . In cases of this kind, elements of visual text migrate from text to context and back, but recognition of such circulation is prevented by the primary cut of text–stroke–context (1991: 178–179).

In the case of Herel's work, this blurring of text and context provides a foundational vocabulary to express the artist's book's aberrance. When one holds any book in their hands, they enter an agreement of sorts with those who created it, whether writer, designer, or publisher. The assumed promise of the book is a promise of the traditional, standard codex: pages, formatting, the inclusion of language with semantic meaning understood through the act of reading. The standard book carries what Mieke and Bal refer to as 'connotational baggage'—we interact with a familiar object in a familiar manner (*ibid.*). However, upon opening one of Herel's artists' books, this clear-cut context becomes confused. The book in this case is instead an art object with visual meaning, and the expected communication through text is sometimes present but often not. In the viewer's hands, Herel's artists' books generate their own context due to the open-ended possibilities of individual interpretation. Each viewer brings with them their own personal context, before creating another unique context in the moment of interaction with the book, resulting in a multiplicitous interpretive environment. The artist's book brings the two polarised ideas of text and context closer together, as the subjective viewer is in control of how they interact with the object.

Unfamiliar Language

Analysis of Herel's *Fragments d'une Première Version d'Aurélia* (1994) demonstrates the artist's book's engagement with connotational baggage. The combination of handwriting and presumed unfamiliar French language in the book lends itself to analysis that is visual rather than literal. Approaching the text and handwriting conventionally, the assumption might be made that the words on the page should be read, should communicate semantically. However, the use of unfamiliar language and illegibility of the personal scrawl in *Fragments* do not facilitate this anticipated literal reading. This opens the viewer to the possibility of a visual interpretation. Rather than deeming the work inaccessible due to the inability to understand the semantic

meaning of the text, the visual analysis of language proposes another innovative way for each viewer to engage with the book.

Handwriting as a graphic form is used throughout Herel's artist book oeuvre, and the artist himself re-writes poems multiple times in an act of personal investigation before including them in his work. Alex Selenitsch (2012) comments:

Not only is a transcriber closer to the origins of the poem than the reader of a printed version, but transcription provides one continuum of mark making from word to picture (31–32).

In his act of writing, Herel transforms the read word into a visual mark on the page, thus demonstrating the need for a formal analysis, a visually semiotic approach, to the symbols in his work. *Fragments* demonstrates this return from semantic text back to the visual mark.

At first glance, *Fragments* appears an unlikely choice to exemplify the visual qualities of words on the page. The first page features little text (2a). The title is typed in small, conservative black font. It is unusually spaced, with a comparatively large gap between the words 'première' and 'version'. My eyes have to jump over this void, which joins the rest of the page to create a large portion of negative space. This gap destabilises the writing, now floating amongst white emptiness rather than anchored safely to the page. Despite being capitalised, the buoyant letters appear unsure of themselves, precariously placed in sequence, ready to fly off the paper's edge. In this case, the connotational baggage of the book suggests a semantic reading, yet when I acknowledge the habitual influence of this approach I am able to question its authority. Even an atypical beginning such as that of *Fragments* can present an opportunity for aesthetic analysis. This introductory exercise demands my eyes work hard to override conventional, complacent reading.

The next page of *Fragments* featuring text is equally rich with analytical possibility. The title is typed again, this time italicised (2b). The diagonal tilt creates a sense of line that runs off the page again. In this book, text is not confined to the page. The word 'Aurélia' is printed in a mossy green, tying the textual form with the green labyrinth stamp and 'LABYRINTH PRESS' printed text at the bottom of the page. This unifying green ink creates another diagonal itself, running in a slant matching that of the italicised text above. Focussing on the diagonals of the page, there is yet another—four small lines of text framing the labyrinth stamp. The stamp is one central form surrounded by four others, balanced and slanted at the same time. This page, comprising primarily text, is overwhelmingly visual.

The following page of *Fragments* features text shaped in two columns (2c). Like the title page, this text is presented in a traditional serif font. The visual interpretation here is to be found in its composition. The page's layout is reminiscent of a newspaper article. The two defined columns mirror those read in print journalism. These shapes present a feeling of the formal, of the factual, of the accurate and true. If I choose to rest upon a habitual approach to reading, the composition of this text speaks to a perceived authority of the published word. Herel has subtly demonstrated the great power of the visual—the influence of shape and form upon text regardless of literal content. Herel demands I make meaning through a visual translation.

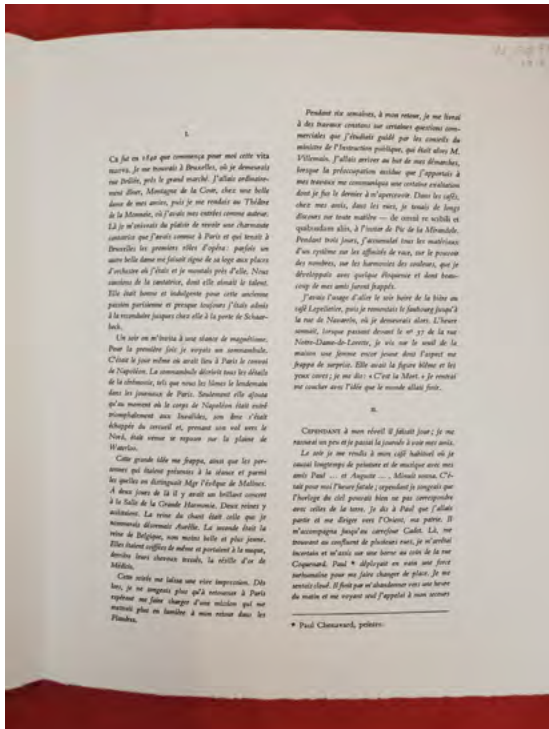
Fragments contains not just a written translation of de Nerval's text but the original manuscript itself. Having practiced non-literal viewing over the previous pages, my eye is now able to consider the blotted ink on this next one (2d). A thick pool of black seeps to the left, and areas



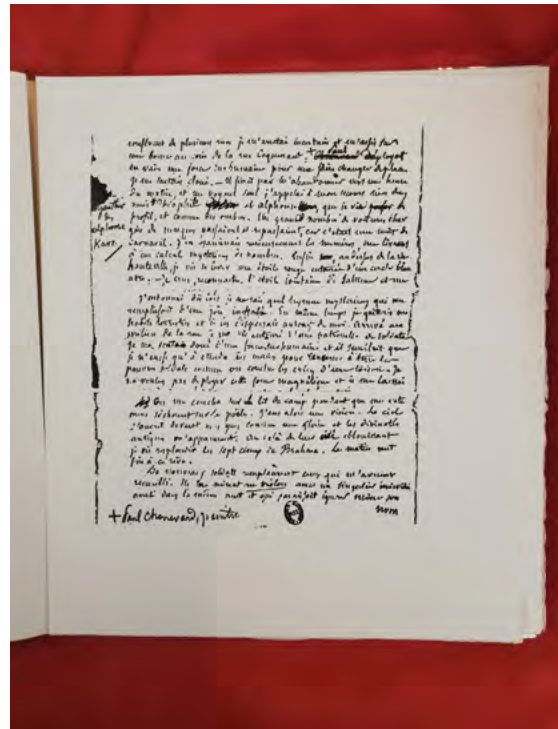
2a



2b

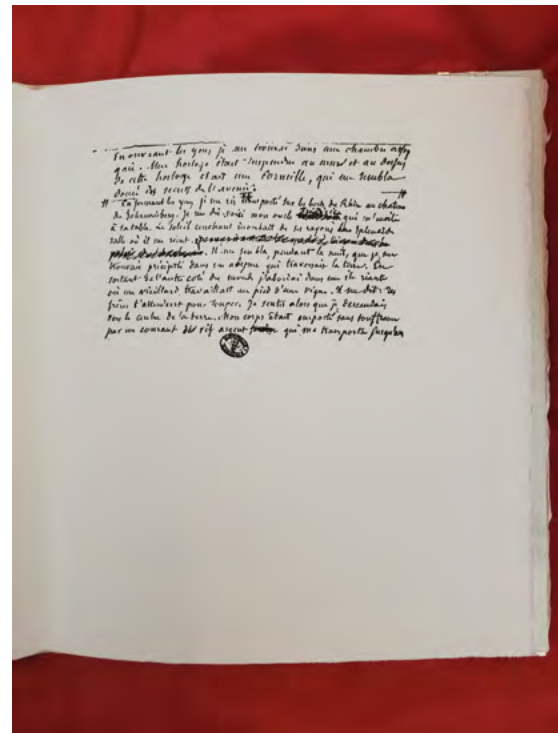
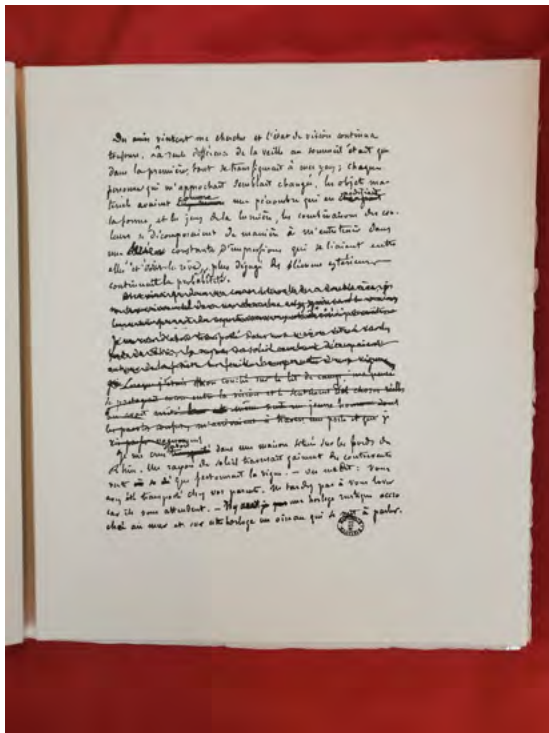


2c



2d

2 a–d (e, f overleaf) Petr Herel, Gérard de Nerval (writer), Thierry Bouchard (typographer, printer), *Fragments d'une Première Version d'Aurélia* (Canberra and Losne: Labyrinth Press, 1994), 16/49, National Library of Australia, Canberra.



2e, 2f Petr Herel, Gérard de Nerval (writer), Thierry Bouchard (typographer, printer), *Fragments d'une Première Version d'Aurélia* (Canberra and Losne: Labyrinth Press, 1994), 16/49, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

where de Nerval crossed out text for rewriting evoke depth. A sense of texture is emphasised by the grooves I imagine this dark handwriting made on the original page, teasingly present on this smooth imaged copy. The agitated lines outlining the original manuscript create a frame, emphasising the intimate nature of the handwriting by forming a protective wall or barrier: a safety net. Handwriting is innately personal, and can be considered a reflection of personality. Handwriting can be messy, scrawled, sprawling and illegible. It provides a rich foothold in the visual interpretation of text. The illegibly written language becomes image.

The artist includes another page of original manuscript—in this instance, de Nerval has scratched out the majority of his text (2e). Herel has obviously not chosen this script for its legibility. The remaining, untouched text is composed of shapes that are consistent and contained. These quick flicks of ink on the page are in contrast with the eliminating lines, which move in irregular patterns. The jagged line in the middle of the page again presents a textured depth in creating a darker segment of the textual form. Along with the wobbling single lines, it contributes to the feeling of form continuing off the page and into the space around it. The awareness of this creative space, the translation of the force behind conception and physical creation into the moving text, demonstrates the poetic experience of Herel's artists' books. Fuelled by this 'poetic intuition', I '[seek] . . . not only to assimilate all known forms but also boldly to create new forms . . . to be in a position to embrace all the structures of the world, manifested or not' (Chénieux-Gendron 1990: 304). Poetry is not limited to a semantic system and can extend forth into a visual one. This page has not been composed semantically, but visually.

The final page of de Nerval's original manuscript contains noticeably less writing (2f). A small paragraph rests at the top of the page, followed by negative space that takes up most of the

page. This negative space gives me the opportunity to find a focal point in a small, circular form that simultaneously marks the end of the text and the middle of the page. This form, printed in the same black ink, appears to be a stamp. It is featured throughout the text, however in its central placement here becomes a significant feature of the page. This stamp's circular form emphasises the short, snappy lines of the preceding text. In comparison to the stamp's oval, the usually round shapes to be found in the alphabet—the likes of 'o', 'p', 'a'—reveal themselves to be aesthetically angular and sharp. This not only reiterates the individual nature of handwriting but the value of visual interpretation in working to override traditional methods of analysing text.

The Polysemy of Meaning

Reassessing rigid traditional semiotics and applying a more flexible analysis to the artist's book facilitates consideration of the field's concept of the 'polysemy of meaning' (Bal and Bryson 1991: 174), extending it to an aesthetic, non-semantic interpretation of text. Visual semiotics is a dynamic field when removed from the conventional, 'theoretical immobility of sign systems' (ibid.: 177). Such an approach directly contrasts historical focus upon systematically valid responses, and supports an experiential analysis of Herel's work. Rather than a fixed format of response, the viewer should instead consider the 'plurality of contexts' when interacting with Herel's work: the possibility of a unique interaction for each viewer, the culmination of interlaced interactions between art object and human hand, artist and viewer, and between book, viewer, and environment (ibid.: 179). This suggests the concept Bal and Bryson refer to as 'the traffic of meaning'—a phenomenon in which meaning fluidly oscillates between object, viewer, and environment (ibid.: 203).

Interacting with one of Herel's books through a paradigm of visual semiotics, I am not attempting to traditionally 'crack' or solve any code, but instead am able to reflect upon the act of interpretation itself. Accepting the 'polysemy of meaning' present in Herel's work is a self-conscious and referential act. Herel's text-based work sits in a *perpetuum mobile*, in which meaning is generated through the individual interpreter (ibid.). It is innately subjective. Visual semiotics presents an open methodology that appropriately matches Herel's revelation of book as artistic medium.

Herel's work presents words on the page that, considering them visually rather than semantically, are not words in the traditional sense at all. Roland Barthes' writing on American symbolist painter Cy Twombly (1928-2011) is arguably analogous to this proposed methodology. Not only does Barthes create an informed subjective response to Twombly's work, he also addresses challenges associated with a non-semantic interpretation of text (Barthes 1985: 157). As Barthes described Twombly's work, Herel also creates that which 'alludes to writing', as will be particularly evident during later analysis of his unique text forms (ibid.: 158). To analyse these letterforms is to realise that Herel's work actively encourages the notion of language as gesture: 'neither a form nor a usage but only a gesture, the gesture which produces it by permitting it to linger: a blur, almost a blotch, a negligence' (ibid.). The word negligence here is particularly provocative.

Herel's words obfuscate meaning, but this is not an esoteric act of exclusivity. Instead, it requires the viewer to interrogate conventional, passive analysis. Text may immediately suggest itself, but meaning does not. Visually, Herel's text forms become symbols that deny

clear interpretation, acting in the face of straight-forward semiotic analysis. The traditionally semantic is abstracted to the visual, and often unknowable, in a manner that doesn't suggest one literal and concrete 'reading'. Meaning is implied and yet, at the same time, denied. Herel demands his viewer make meaning through alternative paths, participating in the continuous, cyclical *perpetuum mobile*. This permits the very questioning of what it is to make meaning. A formal analysis of Herel's language considers the visual weight of his letterforms, rather than seeking a literal understanding.

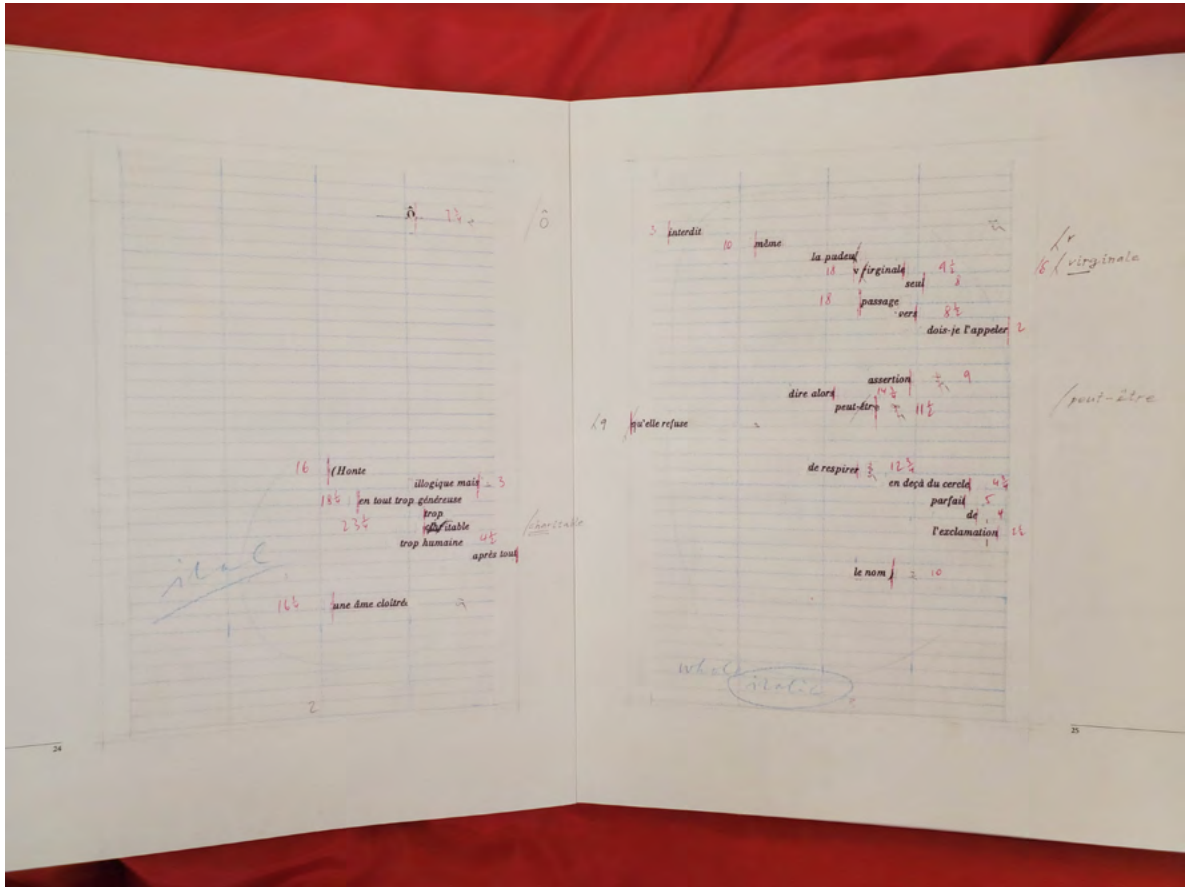
Familiar Language

Herel further challenges the traditional, semantic interpretation of familiar text by presenting it as unfinished. *Delicate Interactions* of 2013, by Christopher Brennan, Petr Herel and Stéphane Mallarmé, is a reworking of the latter's seminal poem *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard*. The book contains pages of poetry visually resemblant of a musical composition. Writing on the pages has been edited by hand with red and blue pen. This annotative presence, this editing mark, leads the text to aesthetically resemble a draft—as if the poem is still under construction. In fact, this book is an offset reproduction of an unfinished work intended for publication in 1998 at the Graphic Investigation Workshop, Canberra (National Library of Australia 2022). While the initially intended book did not eventuate, Herel compiled the mock-up pages into this work, published fifteen years later (*ibid.*). *Delicate Interactions* is simultaneously finished and unfinished. It challenges the general notion that a published book, a finished book, should appear polished and present text that can be traditionally read.

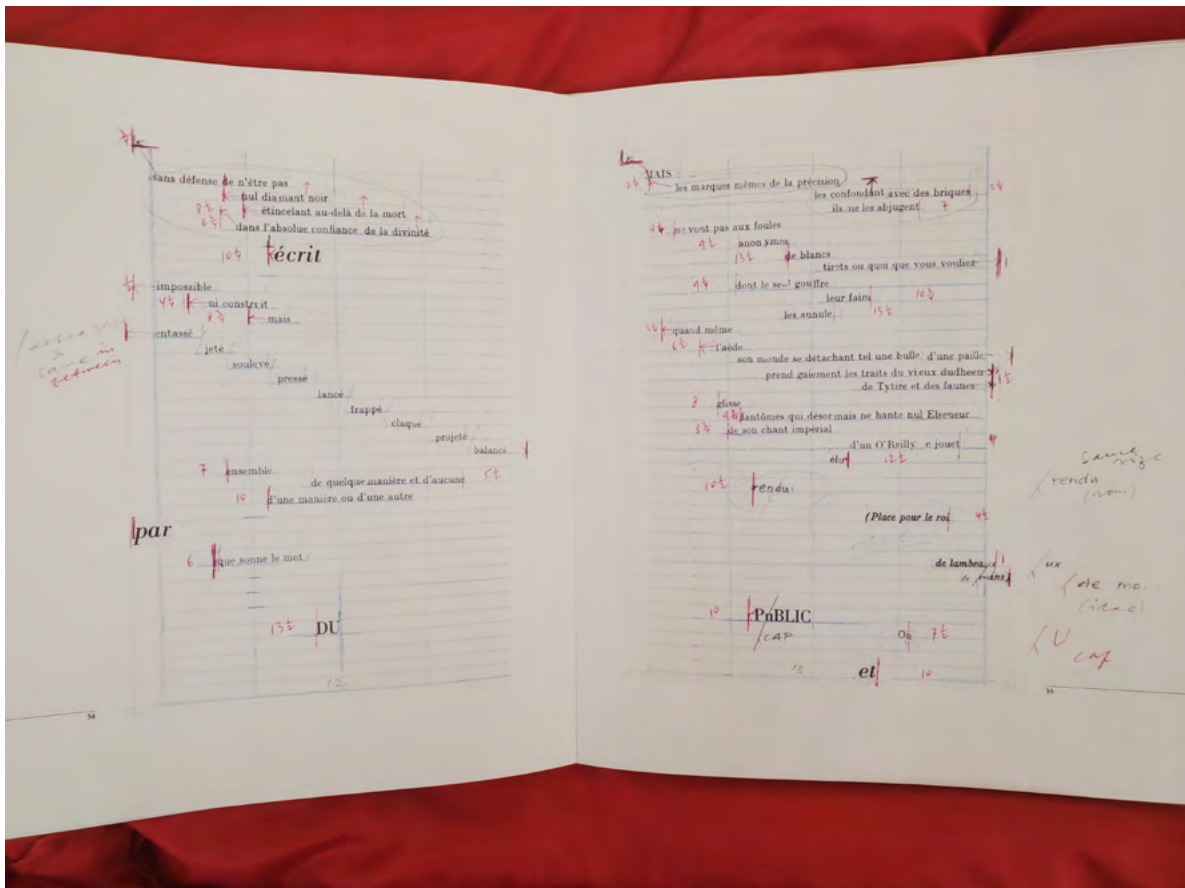
Herel's choice of this annotated format encourages a consideration of the influence a polished aesthetic has upon first impressions of art and writing. Pages twenty-four and twenty-five of *Delicate Interactions* contain a faint blue grid with text that does not appear to be following standard linguistic conventions or a feasible pattern (3a). The poetry has been split into sections and winds its way down and across the pages. Instead of conventional lines, the text is presented like a musical composition. The words framed within the blue grid appear like those contained within an exercise book. The font is small, serif, serious, its shapes restrained and formal. This is explicitly juxtaposed with the liberal swipes of red and blue pen annotating the poetry. The shapes of words, the lines of words, are further broken up by thick red lines seemingly retraced and dug into the paper. Next to these loud scarlet lines, the shapes of the words become a collection of small black lines themselves. The writing's composition resembles a join-the-dot game or a map trail. The black forms slip their way down the page as if carried by an invisible slide, forcing the eyes to flick to and fro, with no resting place. Again, if I were to conventionally read the text to understand, I would be denying myself the possibility for rich formal analysis. The artist's book is an art object. As is the case with *Delicate Interactions*, its visual qualities need to be examined.

Barthes' writing can be used to support the visual reading of text in Herel's books. Rather than presenting a clear message, the artist presents marks that reference gesture and movement. As Barthes asks:

What is a gesture? Something like the surplus of an action. The action is transitive, it seeks only to provoke an object, a result; the gesture is the indeterminate and inexhaustible total of reasons, pulsions, indolences which surround the action with an atmosphere... (1985: 160)



3a 3b



Barthes gives precedence to analysis of the significance of gesture despite the presence of plainly communicated meaning. Herel's version of *Un Coup de Dés* is not a simple representation of the original poem but a re-presentation. He re-presents the lines as not only deconstructed compositionally, in homage to Mallarmé's original typographic layout, but with an added element of editor's mark. With the simplest of editing lines, carets, and commentary, Herel visually manifests the gestures of reading, writing, and thinking. As is the case with standard editing, these annotations may only make clear sense to the formally trained, yet there is meaning to be found in this denial of meaning for everyone else—the act of not presenting meaning is, indeed, meaningful. Applying a formal analysis to text-based works like Herel's forces us to interrogate the very promise of communication within a book.

The text included throughout *Delicate Interactions* encourages the formal analysis of composition and balance. Across pages thirty-four and thirty-five, the layout becomes significantly heavier with text and editor's marks (3b). The composition of the page is busy, with no clear focal point. The rhythmic line of diagonal text on the left-hand page turns words into the shapes of a moving conveyor belt or staircase. This overarching sense of dynamic movement is highlighted by the abundance of negative space surrounding the busy centre. By creating a sense of emptiness around the text, this negative space emphasises the text's very forms. Red pen interrupts the refined, shrinking letters with unwavering line and bright, contrasting colour. By placing explicit mark next to printed text, Herel reduces words back into the graphic marks that make them. Barthes speaks of Twombly as deconstructing writing through his 'loitering' on the page (ibid.: 161). As demonstrated by these pages, Herel is conducting his own exploration of this breakdown of traditional meaning making. The artist destroys the hierarchy between draft and final product by presenting the editing mark alongside the written line. All marks on the page are of equal meaning, participating in their own new 'graphic code' (ibid.).

Unknowable Language

Writing on reception in semiotics has acknowledged the interpretation of a sign as inextricably linked to the person engaging with it. Peirce wrote of the 'creative process of exchange between the sign and the reader' (Crow 2010: 52). When interacting with a sign or sign system, the interpreter brings with them past understanding, learning and associations. Specifically regarding semiotics and the reception of art, Umberto Eco (1932-2016) posits each interpreter has an individual reaction and interpretation to stimulus (ibid.: 166). Though writing mainly on musical compositions, Eco's words can be applied to the subjective analysis possible during the visual interpretation of text.

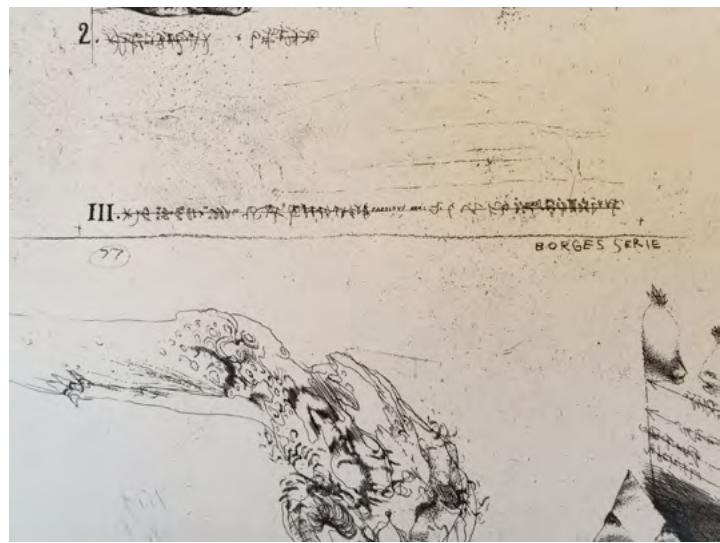
Such subjectivity is necessary for examining Herel's constructed language, which acts in the face of concrete semantic understanding. Eco writes 'the informal sign does not mark the death of form in the visual arts, but proposes instead . . . a field of possibilities. The gestural marks and spatters . . . stimulate the viewer to make their own connections with the work' (ibid.: 174). Herel's work not only stimulates subjective connections but by maintaining familiar formats of standard text also allows for reflection upon the act of reading itself. In this sense, Herel interrogates what it means to communicate and understand, and his language is not simply a message but a direct outcome of his personal exploration of meaning. This again relates to the notion of book as art object—the book as not transporting meaning but containing meaning in itself. There is a sense of both immediacy and intimacy achieved by Herel sharing with the viewer a self-created visual text that is open to infinite interpretations. The work lies dormant until the interpreter interacts with it.

Previous writing on Herel's work makes some reference to his letterforms, but does not undertake the necessary thorough analysis conducted here. Sasha Grishin describes Herel's organic language as 'scribblings of the soul' (1999: 5), before finishing: 'there are some things which cannot be said with words, even if we have to invent a script with which to say them' (ibid.: 34). This observation works as a useful springboard from which to interrogate how meaning is conveyed without words, and furthermore how meaning is conveyed with words. Resting in the liminal space between book and art object, the artist's book is a prime environment in which to identify another liminal zone between image and text: '... a place for invention, for making specific and unique gestures' (Selenitsch 2012: 31). Long-time collaborator Thierry Bouchard wrote of Herel's letterforms as 'pictograms'—a language of the unknown, the displaced, of another world that still engages with our own (Bouchard and Herel 1987: 10).

The letterforms Herel has developed are partly a graphic manifestation of the influence Jorge Luis Borges' (1899-1986) writing has had upon the artist's practice (Herel 2017). In the short story *The Immortal* (1947), the narrator observes a unique script he describes as the 'letters in our dreams, [that] seem on the verge of being understood and then dissolve' (Borges 1962: 142). He notes the letters do not appear to form a cohesive code (ibid.). Instead, these symbols embody individual character, and are wholly visual due to their immediate semantic inaccessibility. Herel's forms reference this text as a visual response to reading this literary description, and magical text is a recurrent theme throughout Borges' oeuvre. As Herel engages with his new textual forms, he challenges the conventional reality of the reader. Like the challenge Herel's work presents for habitual reading, Borges emphasises the power of text in establishing one's sense of being grounded in common understanding, asserting: 'a language is a tradition, a way of grasping reality, not an arbitrary assemblage of symbols' (Borges 1979: 98). Herel's own text, to be demonstrated by the analysis of the appropriately Borgesian inspired *Borges Sequel* (1982), presents a new reality and suggests a new way of grasping it. His letterforms are cosmological, hieroglyphic, alchemical, and ultimately alien forms. Herel's personal code, an untranslatable language, interrogates ideas of communication, reception and understanding, and encourages the analysis of text/context relationships, semantics, the 'polysemy of meaning', and the need for subjective response.

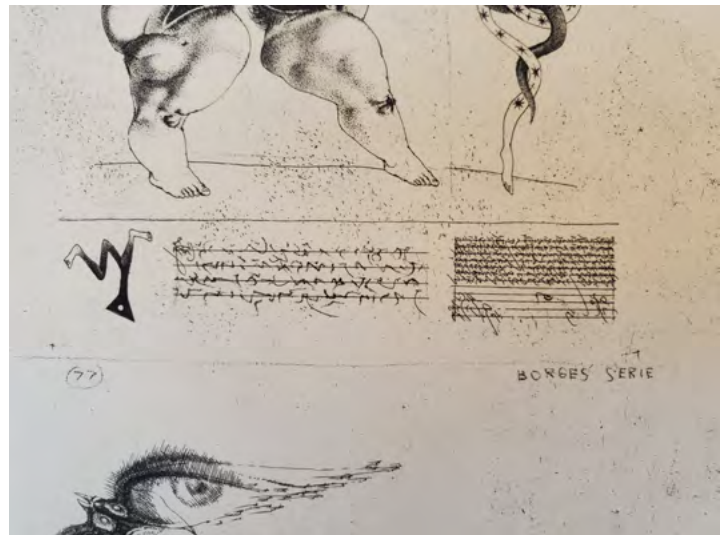
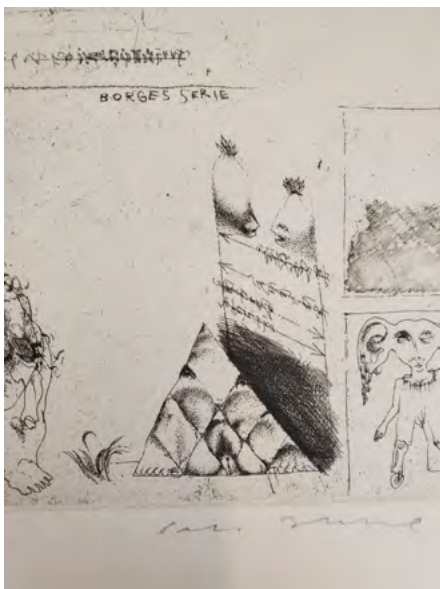
Many of the prints throughout *Borges Sequel* contain Herel's unique letterforms, making the book an exemplary case study for the impact of unknowable language upon interpretation. The first text I come across is demure compared to the larger exquisite corpses that surround it (4a). It resembles a journal article in shape, leading me to reflect upon the influence of conventional layouts of text in shaping my understanding. Not only is Herel playing with the familiar journalistic composition, but he also plays with traditional features of text, emphasising their often-overlooked visual form. On this page, lines, as might be found in a notebook, do not provide a resting point for the text. Herel's letterforms hover around these lines rather than on top of them. The lines here are not to order, to make neat the text, but instead dynamically become a part of the writing itself. The repetitive shapes of the forms themselves suggest a code, a pattern. They present as language, yet are unknowable both literarily and literally. Instead, Herel presents me with a language of visuals.

The visual possibilities of text are demonstrated throughout pages that follow. The second print sees the form of the text change as it runs in a long line across the large page (4b). There is no break for my eyes. Herel has composed his letters so that the page line runs straight through them. This is neither a line of elimination, nor is it a guiding line. Shaken from its

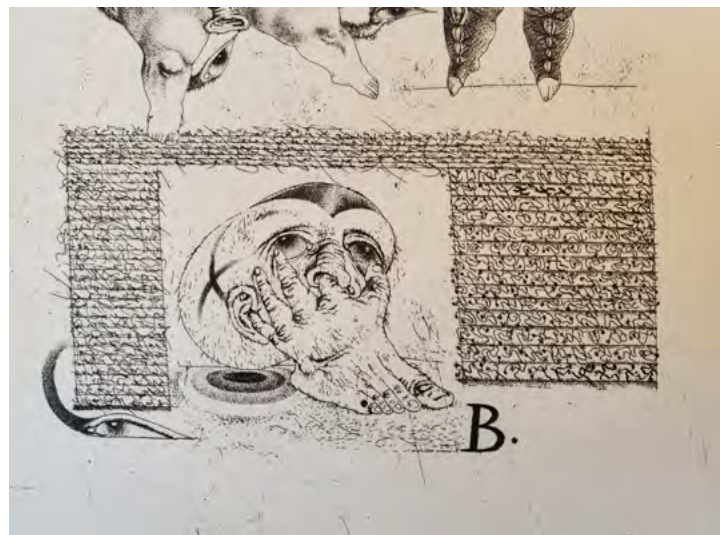


4a 4b

4c 4d



4e 4f



traditional, literary function, Herel tempts the line to interact with the text surrounding it. The letterforms themselves alternate with asterisk shapes, looping around in thin lines before becoming thick and diagonal. There is a sense of density, of weight, as the text begins thin and knotted, transforming to thin and sparsely articulated, before finishing dark and bubbling. Such writing demonstrates that just as an art historian formally analyses an artwork's visual elements of composition, line and texture, so too can they apply this vocabulary to the analysis of text.

Throughout *Borges Sequel*, Herel also interrogates common identifiers of meaning in text. On the same page as above, text forms run along the lines of recognisable arrow shapes (4c). Arrows are diagrammatically used in conventional texts to label, identify, or illustrate a message. Yet on this page, these arrows achieve none of these tasks. There is no literal meaning here, only visual – not one objective meaning to interpretate, but instead an opportunity for infinite subjective analyses. The arrow, an element whose aesthetic contribution is often overlooked, becomes a form that carries the weight of the letters resting upon it. These letters act as weighted load, perhaps working to slow the form down or power a violent release. Again, conducting a formal analysis such as this on Herel's lettering provides the viewer the opportunity to note the presence of movement and form, as well as question the very nature of interpreting text. The formal analysis of text in Herel's artist book practice both exposes aberrance and provides a framework with which to engage with it.

The visual analysis of Herel's text lends itself to an analysis of composition. On sheet three, the letterforms are composed in two lined columns (4d). The left column is evenly spaced out, containing short, sharp flicks. There is a sense of balance and calm. In the right column letters are tight, small, and knotted. The lines on this side do not work to guide, but further cramp everything in and onto itself. This writing is corporeal, muscular, gestural, and biological. The large, irregular plot of negative space within this textual composition, featuring several larger, swooping characters, emphasises the state of anxiety above it. A long line from a dipping letter falls into this blank space. It presents a game of visual snakes and ladders, my eyes darting all over the text above before sliding down this line and through a negative sea of space, before finding unstable grounding in the few letters floating about this space like islands. Here, text is not explaining mood but creating it.

Over the following sequence of pages in *Borges Sequel*, it becomes increasingly evident that Herel is experimenting with composition, form and the aesthetic characteristics of text using his invented visual language. On a later page, text acts as a containing border, buoyant with negative space (4e). The letterforms stretch their arms out—they are letters with limbs. Though there is a sense of the individual presence of each form, they collectively form a linear frame. Herel's letters on this page are cruciform, but do not cross each other to form knots as seen on other pages. Instead, these lines cleanly intersect one another. They all feature a slight diagonal slant, giving the impression they are blowing in the same breeze. The text's visual qualities evoke a calm mood through this uniform movement. This page demonstrates Herel's simultaneous inclusion and subversion of the traditional book codex—he includes a conventional frame around the page's edge, yet does so by manipulating his letters into the necessary shapes. This suggests the malleability of text when treated as a visual entity.

Heightening the sense of aberrance, of the familiar yet unknowable, Herel also creates his own version of conventional punctuation. The final page of *Borges Sequel* features a box of text surrounding a grotesque cephalopod (4f). The letterforms here are densely layered, tight but

orderly. To the left of the exquisite corpse, the forms are overwhelmingly diagonal, running top left to bottom right. On the right hand side, and transforming into this state over the top of the creature's head, Herel includes small asterisks and circles at the end of lines. Used interchangeably, these circular forms act as barbells, halting the line's growth. They mark a stop by mimicking the form of a full stop itself. Viewing the page at arm's length, these dot shapes also present a constellation. I can look directly at the letterforms, but also jump from dot to dot. Not only is reading visual, but aesthetically multidirectional and multilayered. The round-ended shapes resemble small staffs with bulbous heads, snakes, and sperm. They are simultaneously mystical and biological, abstract yet concrete, matching the confronting character of the beast they surround. What is more, the circular shapes match the mole to be found growing on the creature's baby toe, blending text form and image together. Herel undermines the preconceived dichotomy of image and text and creates a spectrum that places them intimately close.

To acknowledge and subsequently analyse the visual qualities of text and language in Petr Herel's work provides a unique opportunity to relate semiotic concepts to the analysis of the artist's book and present a visual analysis of text. This is especially pertinent to the book as medium, as the codex conventionally lends itself to text-based contents and explicit, literal meaning. Yet in Herel's case, the artist interrogates the conventional promise of semantic communication in the book by using language that is unfamiliar, unknowable and undeniably visual. The demands his work makes for a new methodology of visual semiotics, visual meaning making, can then be applied to text known to the interpreter and present a different visual reading. This application of visual semiotics can be utilised to examine the artist's book as a cohesive art object, analysing both text and language in an interwoven manner. A formal, aesthetic analysis of text is innovative and essential to the understanding of Herel's artist book oeuvre, and demonstrates the great opportunities to be found by incorporating this type of analysis into study of the artist's book more broadly.

Images

All photographs: Ella Morrison

- 1 Petr Herel, *Carnet d'un Malade*, 1978, one of two unique impressions, artist's collection, Melbourne.
- 2 Petr Herel, Gérard de Nerval (writer), Thierry Bouchard (typographer, printer), *Fragments d'une Première Version d'Aurélia* (Canberra and Losne: Labyrinth Press, 1994), 16/49, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- 3 Petr Herel, Stéphane Mallarmé (poet), Christopher Brennan (poet), François Boisivon (translator), Peter Brown (translator), Chris Wallace-Crabbe (contributor), Daniel Leuwers (contributor), Thierry Bouchard (typographer), Caren Florance (cover), *Delicate Interactions* (Melbourne: Uncollected Works Press, 2013), 12/15, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- 4 Petr Herel, *Borges Sequel* (Sydney: Rudy Komon, 1982), National Library of Australia, Canberra.

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About the author

Dr. Ella Morrison is a writer and independent researcher based in Canberra, Australia. In 2018 she completed a Doctor of Philosophy at the Australian National University, her dissertation titled 'Petr Herel: the Artist's Book as Aberrant Object'. Her research interests include the artist's book, aberrant objects in art and art history, and experiential methodologies such as those based in touch and time. She has previously worked in curatorial positions at the National Gallery of Australia and is now a reference librarian at the National Library of Australia.



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Poetry

2 Poems

CE Wallace

ARKO IRIS

CE Wallace

My kaleidoscope heart
is wrapped up in condensation
and shards of prismatic light
I give my soul
to you to bridge
the gap between
two worlds

PHASES OF THE MOON

CE Wallace

Here
On the
Dark
Side
Of the
Moon
I sit in
Shadow
Clinging
To the
Promise
That no
Matter
Which
Phase I
Might be
In I still
Remain
Whole

About the author

CE Wallace is a Paraguayan poet and writer based in New York. She began writing poetry as a teenager, attending the New England Young Writers Conference at Bread Loaf in 2002, and has been in love with the written word ever since. Her poetry spans years and experiences and covers topics such as mental health, belonging, romance, and the metaphysical. Her debut book is *Juego de Palabras: Wordplay* (Spain: Valparaíso Ediciones, 2023).

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ARTISTS' BOOKS IN AUSTRALIAN COLLECTIONS

An investigation of materials, methods and meanings in the work of contemporary Australian book artists

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Abstract

This paper presents the findings of a case study designed to understand more about materials, methods and themes of Australian artists' books and their preservation issues in collections. Artists use a huge diversity of materials and methods in the creation of artists' books, which might make these books difficult to preserve in a library or gallery collection context. Based on interviews with five prominent Australian book artists, collectors and curators, this paper suggests that artists choose materials that reflect or express the artistic, social, and political themes of their work, as well as the long historical traditions of bookbinding, printmaking, printing, typography etc, that their work continues. However, the interviewees were also very engaged in the issues of collecting, curating, and preserving these materials. The findings of this study confirm that access to archived information about the artist's themes, intention, and working methods would be invaluable for all aspects of collection management. Thus, there is a need to have a coherent written policies to set rules for what to include or exclude from an artists' books policy in libraries and art collections in Australia.

ARTISTS' BOOKS IN AUSTRALIAN COLLECTIONS

Somayeh (Mona) Soleymani

Artists' books are a relatively new form in cultural collections. Along with forms and movements such as conceptual art, performance art, photography and film, artists' books began to be recognised by collectors and galleries in the 1960s and 1970s (Johnson 2002). Contemporary artists' book culture emerged in Australia from the 1970s and Australian public institutions have started to include artists' books in their collections in just the last few decades (Selenitsch 2008; Florance 2014). These works are each unique, due not only to their texts and illustrations, but also the aesthetic and physical characteristics of their structure and materials. Book artists use a huge diversity of materials and methods, such as printmaking, binding, papermaking, and other bookmaking techniques, as well as a wide range of conceptual frameworks. Artists' books, however, give rise to particularly complex collection management issues, which might make them difficult to be preserved in a library or gallery collection context.

This paper aims to begin a dialogue between book artists and the curators, conservators, and collection managers who care for their work, in the light of their current standards and approaches. This research is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with five Australian book artists, artists' books curators and private collectors. There is a list of questions that the interviewees were asked, and a copy of the questions is in Appendix A.

The author has a Doctorate Degree in Cultural Materials Conservation field and received a Fellowship from the University of Canberra in 2016 to conduct research about Australian artists' books. The author's approach to topic was in consultation with her PhD primary supervisor, Professor Tracy Ireland and through her, the author was introduced to Dr Caren Florance for her assistance in introducing the author to practicing book artists in Australia. The author found it would be useful to conduct a research based on interviewing some prominent Australian artists, curators, and gallery owners to find more about the materials, methods, and meanings of Australian artists' books. The findings of the interview would provide a valuable resource for future researchers and sharing information about the artists and curators' experiences, successes, and failures with methods they applied would also be significantly important. This study has contributed to what the author hopes will be a growing dialogue between artists, curators, and professional conservators in the global conservation field. The interviews explored the curators and artists' opinions about the current materials, methods, and themes in contemporary Australian artists' books, and about the need for standards and guidelines for collecting and preserving artists' books in a collection context.

There is currently a paucity of research on the collection management and preservation issues of Australian artists' books, and the author hopes this work will provide a foundation for not only more appropriate and nuanced preservation practice in collections, but also serve as an important record about contemporary Australian book artists' practices as a basis for future inquiries.

Describing and Understanding Artists' Books

There is no single definition for artists' books. The book is a complex object and it can be made in various ways. The standard pile of pages bound together on one side to form a hinge, and protected by stiff board cover, is only one way of making a book. A simple definition of artist

book is a book made by an artist. This book can be formed as an accordion fold, a continuous scroll, a package of loose papers, or even as electronic media (Ford 1993; Selenitsch 2008; Purcell 2015; Strizever 2015). Art books or illustrated books sometimes merge into the arena of artists' books. Art books are books about artists or artworks and illustrated books are those books in which an artist illustrates a text by someone else (Bury 1995). Further, the term 'artist's book' should not be confused with the conventions of *livres d'artistes* or fine printing (Drucker 1994; Drucker 2004). In fact, librarians, art historians, artists and other scholars have been debating these definitions since artists' books began arriving in libraries, galleries, and private art collections in the 1960s (Buzz 1997; Bury 2007). The results of a survey of art librarians conducted in 1999 by researchers from Indiana University, designed to unify varying definitions of artists' books, have been summarised thus:

Artists' books can take many forms, among them a traditional codex, a stack of playing cards, a flipbook, a tunnel book, and a scroll. Such forms push the boundaries of traditional reading while maintaining the intimate relationship that a book fosters between object and reader. These unusual books may find homes in the collections of fine arts libraries, challenging standard methodologies of organisation and care .
(Chemero 2000, p. 22)

Defining artists' books is like describing art – everyone has a different opinion. Selenitsch explicitly mentions the significance of the interaction between the artwork and the body and senses of the reader:

Typically, an artists' book is a work that becomes evident as you hold it, open it up, go back and forth and then close it up again. Often there is a controlled narrative built into the physicality of the book, so that size, weight, texture, stiffness, and binding are foregrounded. Nearly always, a tangible experience of the book is necessary to absorb it totally.
(Selenitsch 2008, p. 10)

Artists' books have grown out of the conventional 'fine book' or 'illustrated book', which has evolved over the past two centuries. The 'fine press' books are arguably the earliest predecessors of artists' books. These luxurious books, using letterpress typography and delicate bookbinding, were produced in very expensive and exclusive small editions. Thus, the attention to craftsmanship, quality materials and the aesthetic characteristics of fine press books, may be seen as one impetus for the creation of artists' books (Fellowes 2003).

The Interviews

This discussion is based on interviews with five prominent Australian book artists and collectors conducted between April and June 2016. Four of these individuals are book artists and practicing printmakers, while the other is a collection manager and librarian. The interviews explored the materials used by book artists, how the materials and themes of their artworks inter-relate, as well as their opinions about the need for standards and guidelines for collection practices for artists' books in libraries, museums, and art collections in Australia. Before discussing the results of the interviews, I will briefly introduce the interviewees:

Helen Cole studied fine arts and library science. She was the Special Collections librarian at the State Library of Queensland, specialising in **rare books and artists' books**. Cole was involved in building this library's unique collection of artists' books, which has become one of the largest

and best known in Australia. In 2008, she curated the State Library's exhibition *Freestyle Books: Artists' book from the collection*. Cole was interviewed by Somayeh Soleymani on 2 June 2016,

Dr **Caren Florance** is an artist and printmaker and she works with a wide range of book arts techniques; from fine letterpress, through to artist's books. She practices under the trade name of 'Ampersand Duck'. Florance was interviewed by Somayeh Soleymani on 16 April 2016.

Dianne Fogwell has been an exhibiting artist since 1979 and her artworks can be found in many national and international public collections including the State Library of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia), the State Library of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia), the National Library of Australia (Canberra, Australia), the Joan Flasch Collection, Chicago Institute of the Arts (Chicago, USA), and The National Museum for Women in the Arts (Washington DC, USA). Fogwell was interviewed by Somayeh Soleymani on 26 April 2016.

Noreen Grahame is a gallerist dealing in prints and artists' books who established the Centre for the Artist Book, a collection of over 700 international and Australian artists' books. She owns a private gallery (grahame galleries + editions) in Brisbane where she mounted exhibitions of artists' books with international and Australian content in 1991 and 1993, and also held the first artists' books fairs in Australia during the period 1994 to 2007. Grahame was interviewed by Somayeh Soleymani on 2 June, 2016.

Monica Oppen is an artist working across the fields of book arts, writing, printmaking, and bookbinding. She is also a prominent collector of artists' books and established a library of artists' books called the *Bibliotheca Librorum apud Artificem*, which is based in Sydney (Lyssiotis & Oppen 2011). Oppen was interviewed by Somayeh Soleymani on 2 May 2016.

Having selected five Australian book artists, artists' books curators and private collectors to interview, it became clear that many different artists produce artists' books, but very few Australian artists specialise only in artists' books. They are painters, sculptors, and printmakers etc, who also make artists' books. Each of these individuals was chosen because, as well as being artists, their professional responsibilities require them to manage and care for artists' books on a regular basis. While this is a small sample of Australian book artists and collectors, their opinions, and career experience provide insights into how artists, collectors and curators in Australia are currently thinking about artists' books.¹ During the research visits to the two galleries and artists' workshops, the author had the opportunity to see how these art works were housed in the galleries, as well as the artists' workshops where they were produced.

Themes Emerging from the Interviews

Book Artist's Materials, Methods, and Themes

The use of uncommon or unexpected materials is a key characteristic of artists' books. In addition to commercially produced and handmade paper, artists use fabric, glass, wood, leather, metal, and stone in their artistic creations (Ford 1993; Wasserman 2006). The artists' skills and personal interests commonly influence their choice of materials. For instance, Fogwell's primary artistic tools include paper, printing, pen, ink, pencils, and gouaches, but she also works with other materials including metals, wood, and cloth in her book creation. Fogwell is concerned with environmental and political themes in her artists' books. In 2007, she made the work *Pack for the weekend (1)* to reflect her concerns around the themes of war and refugees. The title came from a conversation she had with one of her staff members when she was the director of Lewis Editions. Fogwell explains that an Iraqi staff member told her over lunch one



1 Dianne Fogwell, *Pack for the weekend*, 2007.

day that after her husband died, she and her two little girls were saved by the Red Cross, they helped her escape after an Iraqi soldier came into her home and held a gun to her head and threatened to kill her. When Fogwell asked: 'What do you pack when you know you are leaving your whole life and siblings behind?' She replied, 'You pack for the weekend' (Fogwell 2007).

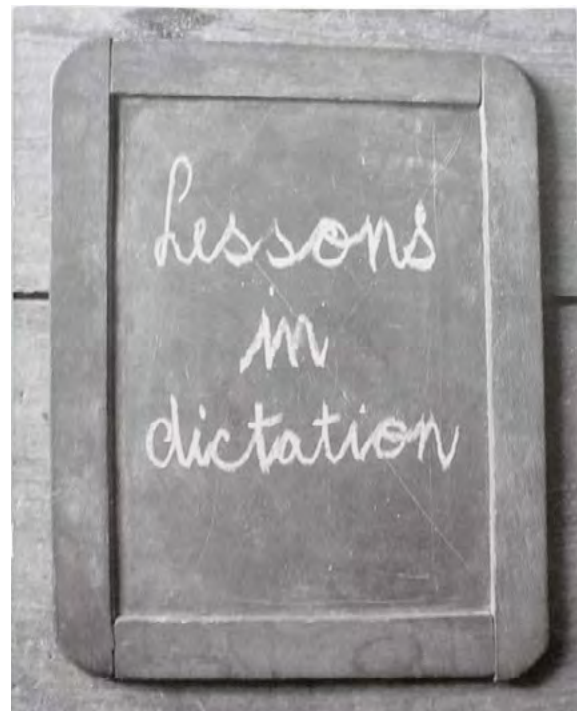
The book size is 13 x 17.5 x 1.4 cm with the hot pressed Magnani 654 rag paper. The media is oil-based letterpress ink with the linocuts print technique. The text is Gill Sans® condensed, using inkjet laser printer. It was in an edition of 15 books hand-bound section sewn with waxed thread by Fogwell and 10 books loose leaved. The book cover is a linocut design, printed in silver ink on black cover board.

Fogwell believes that artists' book is a distinct field of artistic activity that deserve their own identity and focus. She stated that artists' books, whether small or very large need to be held in the hand to be interpreted and responded to by the body. She also suggests that people need to visualise the artist's book in a very particular way, read it in a very particular sequence, perceive it, and interact with it personally, and she believes that this is a totally different experience from the experience of looking at an artwork, such as a sculpture, painting, or print. Fogwell continues: 'the artist's book has its own identity, and it sends its own intellectual message, it cannot be perceived as a three-dimensional sculpture or a print. When you stand in front of a print, you view it, but when you take a book and hold it, you interact with it and make the body move in a particular way, which is quite a sensual performance... Artists' books are related to our body and have tactile qualities, so people like to look at a book without any limitation for interaction and viewing needs to be a more intimate or visual experience'.

Grahame first came across artists' books in the early 1970s when she lived in Europe and was influenced by the work of Dieter Roth, arguably the most significant and imaginative post-war European book artist. Grahame was 'blown away' by her first experience of Roth's works in an exhibition in Zurich in 1970, where he showed a huge work called 'literary sausages', made of shredded paper, fat and gelatine boiled in water and stuffed into animal intestines.



2 Noreen Grahame's *Monsieur Le Président*, 1995. Courtesy Noreen Grahame.

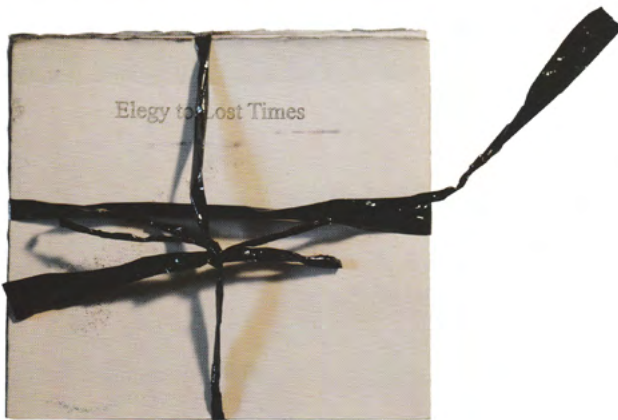


3 Noreen Grahame, *Lessons in dictation*, 2007, Courtesy Noreen Grahame.

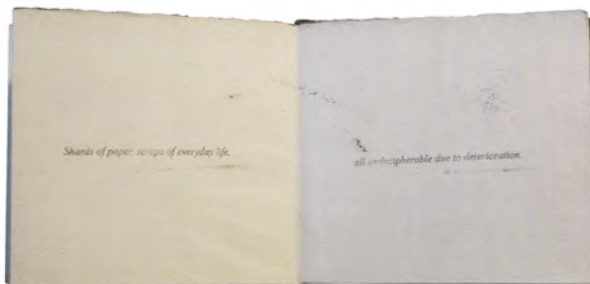
Like Fogwell, Grahame is also influenced as a book artist by contemporary social and political events. An example is her protest flipbook *NON, Monsieur Le Président* (2), which resulted from her first reaction to the news in 1995 that the French President planned to resume nuclear tests in the Pacific. The artist's immediate reaction was 'no, no, no and no' which was probably also influenced by the words of a Jacques Brel song. In her book, the word 'non' gradually enlarges as the reader flips the pages, until it almost shouts *NON, Monsieur Le Président*. The 2015 reprint of *Monsieur Le Président* is 14 leaves digitally printed in one colour (red) on 135 gsm Grange Laser Plus paper and then side stapled. This reproduction follows Grahame's layout and production as for the 1995 version, which was laser printed (in black) on her printer at the time. Due to changes in technology, it was no longer possible to make them this way.

A further example by Grahame is *Lessons in Dictation* (3), an artist's book which takes as its theme the absurdity of the dictation test as proscribed in Section 3(a) of the Australian Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. She was inspired by the 1934 Egon Kisch incident (Lyssiotis & Oppen 2011). Kisch, a Czech national citizen and a communist journalist, was invited to speak at a meeting organised by the 'Movement Against War and Fascism' in Melbourne. Wanting to prevent him entering the country and speaking, the Australian government of the day ordered he undergo a dictation test in Scottish Gaelic, a language that they were sure the multi-lingual Kisch would not know, thus causing him to fail and be deported!

The memory of the Kisch incident, in the context of the recent reintroduction of the Australian Citizenship Test in 2007, led Grahame to create this work in the form of a children's writing slate, with the title 'The White Australia Game' on its back cover, the name of a board game from the 1920s.

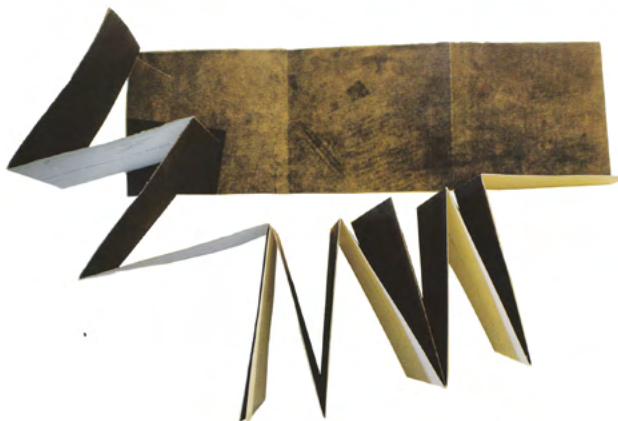


4 Caren Florance's *Elegy to lost times*, 2004. Image from Lyssiotis & Oppen 2011, *The Silent Scream: Political and social comment in books by artists*, Ant Press, Sydney, pp, 166. Reproduced with permission from Monica Oppen.



It is a 'game' that conservative Australia is still prepared to 'play' well into the 21st century and stands in stark contrast to the publicly proclaimed belief that Australia is a land of opportunity and a place which offers everyone 'a fair go'.

(Lyssiotis & Oppen 2011, p. 116)



Artists use the materials that they have access to and have familiarity with or mastery of, in their book production (Drucker 2004). Florance studied English and History at university. She discovered letterpress through her English studies and her passion for reading led her to a highly conceptual use of printed text and letter press printing – evoking commercially printed books – but handmade in her case. Florance often uses text and typography creatively as part of her aesthetic renditions of poetic texts (Gardner & Kilner 2016). In the *Elegy to Lost Times* (4), Florance was influenced by the epic of Gilgamesh (the king

of Uruk in ancient Sumeria), which was recorded on clay tablets more than 6000 years ago. Florance is also concerned with the nature of perishable materials and obsolescent forms of recording information, including vinyl records, videos, floppy discs, and cassettes, which future generations will have probably never heard of. The book is a recycled offset lithography print; the original print was made on an offset lithography press, using oil-based ink and solvent release from photocopies, then it was folded and cut to make a 'snakefold' structure. Finally, Florance added text via solvent release from photocopies.

This small folded book opens out to form a poster. The image is dark, almost indecipherable. The depicted objects, perhaps cash register docketts, are being swallowed by darkness. Folded up, the book is tied with a length of videotape. It is comforting to think that there might be a second use of miles of redundant videotape.

(Lyssiotis & Oppen 2011, p. 166).

Oppen started practicing as a printmaker, but also making hand-bound, limited editions books, using etching and printmaking techniques to create their content. Later her style shifted towards



5 Monica Oppen's *When the soldiers...*, 2009. Image from Lyssiotis & Oppen 2011, *The Silent Scream, Political and social comment in books by artists*, Ant Press, Sydney, pp. 145. Reproduced with permission from Monica Oppen.

the concept of 'democratic multiples' – popular artists' books in 1960s, which were small and cheap books that could be made easily available (Montero & Tanaka 2012; Cole 2014).

Oppen is very much interested in environmental themes and issues of human interaction with the environment, and these tend to be her main interests in her artists' books. However, Oppen was also influenced by the subject of rape during war times and made *When the Soldiers...* (5) as a call to have rape listed as a war crime.

Some of the text is done with a home laser printer and some with lettering stencils. The images have been done with stencils, monotypes, and stamps. The printing inks used were water-based relief block ink, acrylic paint, and stamp pad ink. The pages were interleaved with dress fabrics and simple tarlatan cloth. The binding is a non-adhesive binding and conversely was hand stitched on tapes. The pieces of fabric have been threaded between the fold sections of paper. Looking at this book, the viewer gets a feeling of roughness and incompleteness.

The cover is raw grey binder's board with the title stencilled across it and there are a series of horizontal black lines which are intentionally stained by blood, revealing the shadow of a woman ... The text acknowledges the damage of rape, the violation and degradation of the victims. The book has dress fabric pages as well as paper pages. The uncomfortable way in which these fabric as pages collapse rather than fold back like paper, echoes the fragility of the women, and each cloth is different, each woman different.

(Lyssiotis & Oppen 2011, p. 144)

Reasons for Choosing Specific Materials in Artists' Books

When asked why she chose the materials she used in her work, Oppen responded that she just loves the book medium, and that it is her passion to harken back to traditional book making practices, including printmaking and bookbinding, and that this was also a statement about the vast numbers of commercial products. She explained that in the digital world in which we now live, there is not enough appreciation of the hand bound and hand printed artefacts, and that they are undervalued. Oppen saw herself as a 'champion of handmade books'. She added that, in this challenge to keep these artisanal skills alive, artists' books have the ability to be an alternative to the screen because of their physicality and reality, their tangibility and capacity to produce instant sensations and feelings.

Despite Grahame's respects for precious books, there are few sumptuous elements in her artists' books. Grahame's books include a straightforward message, with regards to the immediacy of the texts written either by a computer program, or handwritten words. Fogwell's books, on the other hand, seem sumptuous and deluxe. She describes her materials as her own 'language' and the choice therefore depends on the idea the book conveys. Despite her preference for fine papers, if the idea is 'stronger' than this material, she will work with different kind of materials to transfer the book's message, such as a pressed metal book. The closer the materials they use are to 'themselves', the more honest the work, Fogwell said. She continues, 'as an artist, I always come back to materials that are part of my language in all my artworks'. However, Oppen, who is more concerned with mastery of traditional book making skills, states that she is mostly interested in how the book will look, and this dictates what processes and materials she will use.

Collection Management Issues Associated with Artists' Books

One of the principal features of contemporary art, including artists' books, is the diverse range of materials and techniques that contemporary artists have access to and may choose to use in their work. Some artists seem sensitive to what materials and techniques they use in their artists' books, but others seem to be indifferent to the longevity of their chosen materials, leaving the conservator or the museum to look after the work.

In this study, when we asked, 'From your perspectives, what are the most important collection management and preservation issues surrounding artists' books?', Cole responded that while some artists are aware of archivally sound materials for making artists' books and are aware of the longevity of their materials, for others it is a minor consideration. 'They use absolutely all sorts of materials including glass, metals, papers, and even clay'. At the State Library of Queensland, Cole came across an artist's book made of fish, which was a very challenging book to conserve (Dabrowski 1996). They had to make a special Perspex (poly methyl methacrylate) box for the book and used oxygen scavenger to make an inert and oxygen free microclimate inside the Perspex case. For the exhibition purposes, they took photographs of every page for them to be viewed virtually, without taking out the book of the housing. She added another work that has challenged her, and the Library's conservators was *Double Act* by Tanya Myshkin, a paper text block with letterpress printing and wood engravings, based on the play by Eugene Ionesco. The pages of the book are loosely inserted into vellum covers, which have been tanned with glycerine. To enforce the theme of decay in the play, the tanning process was not stopped, and the cover continues to decay, posing a threat not only to the book's longevity, but also to the papers of the book. As it was the initial intention of the artist to make the book in this way,

the Library's conservators wrapped the text block in Mylar sleeve (polyester film) to protect it from the chemically active vellum and also encapsulated the cover. The whole book was then placed in an acid free phase box to separate it from the rest collections.

Cataloguing and Housing Artists' Books in Collections

Artists' books are often difficult to describe using standardised cataloguing rules and they often do not contain the necessary information about themselves to help librarians catalogue them easily, for instance they often lack clearly identifiable bibliographical details (Ford 1993). Annie Herlocker has commented on the complex problems associated with cataloguing artists' books. In an interview with several librarians who work with artists' book collections, she states many of the artists' book collections use Library of Congress (LC) cataloguing standards in accordance with using rare books and manuscripts cataloguing standards to tailor the challenge of inflexibility within standardised cataloguing (Herlocker 2012).

Many artists' books do not sit perfectly on library shelves, and it is therefore costly for the library to make specific shelves for them (Cole, 2016). Artists' books come in a wide range of oversized, undersized and oddly-sized formats and they can pose threats to the safety of neighbouring books in a library's shelf if their formats have not been carefully considered before housing (Herlocker 2012). There is a scarcity of solution to the shelving and storage problems in collections of artists' books, however, some collecting institutes currently created innovative approaches in libraries and other artists' books collections to deal with some of these issues. For instance, artists' books can be put in individual archival enclosures such as acid free boxes, envelopes, or folders to protect the artwork from dirt, light and other sorts of deterioration factors. Most artists' books can be shelved either upright or flat depending on the configuration of the books and the oddly shaped books can also be kept in a separate closet with controlled temperature and relative humidity according to the considered standards for the rare books' collections. Permanent display and temporary exhibitions also give rise to further sources of damage to artists' books that might threaten their longevity. These issues include constant exposure to light over the exhibition period, improper handling practices, fluctuations in relative humidity and temperature due to travelling or inappropriately designed exhibition vitrines (Chemero 2000). However, new technologies including videotaping the turning of each page of the artist book, an automated web exhibition or visual catalogue could be applied to restrict the impacts upon artists' books in libraries and collections (Chemero 2000). Today, digitisation techniques are often seen as an effective preventive conservation strategy for protecting artists' books, as the digitised copies can be provided for researchers instead of the unstable original books (Soleymani 2015). However, although digital access may make books more accessible in some ways, this also creates a barrier between the reader and the physicality of the book, which is obviously such a key aspect of this medium to the makers (Herlocker 2012; Soleymani 2015). Thus, the link between shelving and online catalogues should be properly maintained by librarians to keep the safety of the books and the integrity and usability of the collection for interested patrons.

Guidelines are Much Gentler than Standards

Writing or revising artists' books collection policy address the scope of an existing collection and clarify the future development of collection in a library, museum, or galley context. Wilson (2002) suggests three steps to develop a collection of artists' books. Firstly, gathering a list

of critical issues related to the collection of artists' books including housing, sources, and selection. Then, study existing collection development policies and finally where applicable employ examples of policies at other institutions including the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS-L). The artists and curators were asked in the interviews 'Do you see a need for standards or guidelines for the collection of artists' books in libraries? If yes, should it be on a regional, national, or international level?' Cole said, 'standardising artists' books would inhibit the curators' decisions' and she feels there are too many exceptions in artists' books to standardise them. Grahame is also against the idea of standards because she does not like the connotations associated with the concept. She feels the word implies a need for enforcement. She adds:

Once you start to standardise anything in art, you start to lose that wonderful spontaneity of ideas. Artists then start to work towards this because they think that is what they have to do to have the work acquired by collections.

Oppen does not see need for standards either, but she stated, 'a conversation or flexible guidelines might work'. She believes each institution has to have their own specific guidelines to define artists' books. She continues that when purchasing artists' books, often the librarian, conservator or curator's advice is being sought, as well as the guidelines on how to conserve and handle these books. If there is an institutional process for conversation and dialogue, as well as guidelines around critical information sharing, this would make the process easy and trustworthy.

Florance was the only artist who mentioned an interest in developing a clearly written collection policy. She adds 'each library has its own collecting niche and the libraries collect different kinds of artists' books, one much more fine press and another one much more sort of contemporary'.

The artists and curators were then asked 'Whom do you feel should be in charge of such standards? What group or organization or individual do you see as suitable for such a job? Or should it be a shared responsibility?' Four of the artists interviewed agreed with the idea of a shared responsibility to guide collections of artists' books in libraries. Fogwell added that it would be a good idea to have a shared responsibility for standards or guidelines and that their success would depend upon the caliber and reputation of the individuals creating the standards. If experts in the field wrote them, she said, she would most likely defer to them. Cole also supported a shared responsibility between curators and conservators. She stated also that seeking the artists' permission is very important in some cases. In the State Library of Queensland, if any artists' books require mending, staffs contact the artist first to find out whether they would like to come and do the mending themselves. Also, for exhibition purposes, artists' instructions are sought to understand if they have any specific intention about the lighting system or if the books require setting up in a particular way.

Oppen also believes that libraries and institutional collectors should have a shared responsibility because they assess the artwork, purchase it and preserve it. She continued, the library and collecting institutions cannot be expected to collect and maintain every possible platform. The artist has to, for example, understand the digital medium is a transitory thing, if the artist makes a digital book, he/she should expect the fact that many collecting institutions would not support this format. However, Grahame is an advocate of individual responsibility, she mentioned that the collecting institution should oversee preserving artists' books once acquired. She suggested that if a collection makes a set of standards, such as not purchasing

very small books or books that cannot be opened, then artists would start working to those standards in a very narrow way.

Why Collect Artists' Books?

Australian public collections have only a recent history in collecting artists' books and the National Gallery of Australia, the State Library of Queensland and the State Library of Victoria were amongst the first institutions to collect them. From 1989, more galleries and libraries have sought to add artists' books to their collections, such as Artspace Mackay, the State Library of NSW and private galleries and collections such as Grahame Galleries + Editions (Cole 2015). When asked why she collects artists' books, Cole stated that the State Library of Queensland began collecting artists' books due to the focus on Australian arts in the collection that was established by the donation of the James Hardie Library of Australian Fine Arts in 1988, which was a huge collection focussed on the documentation of fine arts in Australia, including monographs, serials, exhibition catalogues, collections of limited edition books, art research resources, and also books about Australian art and artists.

Oppen and Grahame collect artists' books to directly support the artistic community and of course for their personal interest. They both agreed that their collections are used primarily by teachers and students, but they are also made available to occasional visiting scholars, curators, artists and interested members of the public. Grahame also shares her collection with the public through exhibitions, which she has organised with both international and Australian content for over 16 years, including the first artists' books fairs in Australia from 1991 to 2007.

How Are Artists' Books Treated in Comparison with Other Collection Items?

When asked if artists' books were treated differently from/ or the same as other materials in their collections Cole confirmed that artists' books were 'kept as a discreet collection by themselves'. They are all catalogued with the same prefix as other books in the collection, and all shelved in the same area, but they are housed differently, and each have their own box. The artists' books in the State Library of Queensland are catalogued at a higher level compared to other books in the collection. They will do the basic cataloguing, which includes publication, details, and all other relevant things however, for cataloguing artists' books cataloguers will be provided with extra information including the materiality of the book, type of paper, type of binding, and if possible, the librarians also include an artist's statement to provide more information about the artist and the context for the creation of the book. Thus, librarians put a synopsis of the book's themes on the cataloguing record if it is possible. The same practice is performed at Michigan State University's Fine Arts Library (Wilson 2002).

There was some controversy between the interviewed artists and curators about strategies to preserve artists' books, such as the restriction of access to artists' books, the need for gloves when holding and handling the books, and around the use of protective interleaving to stop inks migrating from page to page. Cole stated that in terms of different treatment, artists' books are treated as rare books, so people have to read them in a reading room close to the reference desk and they have to wear cotton gloves. Today, most major collecting institutions provide advice sheets and guidelines for the care and handling of artworks such as documents, manuscripts, and rare books. The guidelines setting out policies and procedures such as wearing gloves, either cotton or nitrile and some mention the need to have clean hands (Hoffberg 2007; McKay 2008). For protecting larger size books, Grahame uses archival acid free box, while

Mylar sleeves are used to store smaller books. She treated the books the same way as her prints, photographing and cataloguing them. Oppen stores her collection of artists' books in an environmentally controlled room, with restricted temperature and relative humidity compared to her prints, which she admitted are 'just victims of the daily temperature and humidity'.

Conclusion

These interviews provide us with a snapshot of some of the current materials, methods and practices of book artists working in Australia. These book artists use a wide variety of materials and convey a wide range of messages, but there are many similar issues and common perceptions regarding artists' books' permanence and preservation in libraries and galleries. The interviews suggest that some artists seem sensitive to what materials and techniques they use in their artists' books, but others seem to be indifferent to the longevity of their chosen materials or even, as mentioned before, they deliberately use perishable materials in their artworks. These interviews also highlight the issues and challenges that conservators and curators face when preserving artists' books in a library or art collection. For instance, it would be useful to know more about what materials and methods artists employ in the book's creation and then how decisions have been made about their preservation. It would also be worthwhile to compare the international traditions of making artists' books and compare current preservation practice for safeguarding the books in collections, as well as examine further how they have evolved.

The findings of this study confirm the need to interview more artists, curators, and artists' books collectors to capture attitudes related to the creation, storage, and preservation of their work. Further work is needed to develop a survey so that artists, curators, and collectors can take the opportunity on broader questions in the field.

Although the artists and curators in this study were opposed to standards regulating their collections, guidelines may be appropriate to assist with cataloging, preservation needs, and access issues, and for assisting with cross-disciplinary dialogue. For instance, libraries need to confer with art conservators if artists' books are to be a mainstay in libraries, and then storage facilities and preservation knowledge needs to be adapted appropriately.

As the interest in collecting artists' books grows and more art collections acquire this kind of art works, the need for a collection policy is vital. Libraries may find a written policy to ensure thoughtful and well-organised collecting practices for acquisition of artists' books in their collections. It seems there is still a need to have a coherent written policies to set rules for what to include or exclude from an artists' books policy in libraries and art collections in Australia.

Finally, it is of course impossible to require that a conservator or curator must have a close working relationship with the artist to better understand the artist's intention. But access to archived information about the artist's themes, intention, and working methods would be invaluable for all aspects of collection management. Thus, guidelines could also be an important mechanism for encouraging the recording and circulating such information locally, nationally, and internationally.

Appendix A. Interview questions

- 1 Do you consider yourself specifically a 'book artist' or just an 'artist'?
- 2 Do you have any formal education or training in the book arts? If not, what was your route into making artists' books?
- 3 How do you define artists' books?
- 4 What materials, techniques and themes do you use in your work?
- 5 Why do you prefer to use your chosen type of materials?
- 6 Are you aware of the long-term properties of materials you use in artists' books over time?
- 7 From your perspectives, what are the most important conservation issues surrounding artists' books? (Longevity and stability of books in a museum environment or a private art collection).
- 8 In your opinions, are there enough studies about the longevity of materials used in contemporary artists' books in Australia?
- 9 Do you see a need for standards or guidelines for the collection of artists' books in libraries? If yes, should it be on a regional, national, or international level?
- 10 Whom do you feel should be in charge of such standards? What group or organization or individual do you see as suitable for such a job? Or should it be a shared responsibility?
- 11 What would be the benefit of standardising the collection of artists' books?
- 12 What would be the negatives of standardising the collection of artists' books?

Artists' Books Collection and Curatorial Questions:

- 1 Why do you collect artists' books?
- 2 How do you commonly collect artists' books? (Gift, donation, purchase, other).
- 3 Who are your readers? (Artists, scholars, curators, general public, other?)
- 4 How are artists' books treated differently from other materials in your collection?
- 5 How are artists' books treated the same as other materials in your collection?
- 6 Where do you seek information when making decisions regarding artists' books? Colleagues (librarians, curators, other)? Literature? Other.
- 7 Do you have defined standards or guidelines for collecting/handling artists' books at the local level? If yes, how were these guidelines created?

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Notes

¹ The artists' names and works can be identified throughout this study in accordance with the ethics approval from the University of Canberra Committee for Ethics in Human Research (Project number 16-62).

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MYGRATIONS, MIGRATIONS

A creative essay for an artwork

Nien Schwarz

Edith Cowan University

MYGRATIONS, MIGRATIONS

Nien Schwarz



1 Nien Schwarz, *Mygrations* (1998–99) installation detail. 1942 military maps, calico, thread, polymer binder, wood. 400 x 400 cm. Canberra Museum & Gallery

19:45 Thursday 18 February 1999

Last drinks. It's been a heady night for which I bought a little black dress and even had my hair cut—the first time in Australia. Four years on and my life is still punctuated with many firsts. The pitched clamour of the black-clad crowd at the opening of my exhibition *Beyond Familiar Territory* is fading into an inky blue summer evening.

I came to Australia to study. I am the Australian National University's first PhD candidate in the Visual Arts. *Beyond Familiar Territory* features multiple sculptures, all outcomes of my PhD candidacy and discussed in my exegesis. The chapters in my dissertation are intended to be published separately. All up, probably 60,000 words. Next month, here in the gallery, I face three external examiners to defend my thesis. The assessment will be exceptionally rigorous; there are no goal posts yet for this new degree.

Everything I had in me I poured into researching and creating the works for this exhibition. My studio is gutted, almost ready for the next HDR student. This exhibition terminates my intimate relationship with Australian maps, metals, rock specimens, hand-dyed and map-printed fabrics, and Canberra red bricks from which I created visual and visceral stories about this place Australia. I feel suspended between many places. No place is home anymore. What next? In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) Michel Foucault writes 'instead of finding reassurances... one is forced to advance beyond familiar territory, far from the certainties to which one is accustomed, towards an as yet' (37).

A sliver of *Myigrations* beckons. I cross the gallery to commune with her. Cascading to the floor from just below the gallery's ceiling, this room-sized wall map is a sea of aquamarine and bird egg blues.

Up close *Myigrations* is a meticulous patchwork of row upon row of small, overlapping, stamp-sized squares of ocean maps. The perspective is aerial. Most of the collage is a vast expanse of blue, while far below we see, what could be, long rolling swells lapping the shores of a circular chain of tiny islands. There's an uncanny sensation of floating: a vertiginous umbilical spiralling between Heaven and Earth.

The flanks of the collage sway gently to overhead air currents. I breathe with her. Then whisper good night.



2 Nien Schwarz, *Myigrations* (1998–99) installation detail.

10:10 am Friday 19 February 1999

Why are our tears salty, tasting like sea water?

My 37th birthday coincided with last night's opening of *Beyond Familiar Territory*. The opening also marked the material conclusion of my doctoral studies. Today I'm looking forward to the airconditioned gallery and quietly communing with my works. I have yet to write the final chapter of my exegesis.

It's bloody hot this morning! I don't feel like I had a birthday yesterday, I'm accustomed to celebrating it in the coldest month. Wilting like cooked spinach I seek the shadiest footpaths between Ainslie and the Canberra Museum & Gallery in Civic. I'm accompanied by overlapping crescendos and decrescendos of cicada choruses. Bark crackles underfoot. My toes are burning. I tell a woman off for torturing her dog clearly desperate to get off the flesh-sizzling footpath.

I've arrived flushed and light-headed. I'm amazed someone's already at the exhibition, and especially that's he's *sitting* in front of *Myigrations*. There's not supposed to be a bench in front of my wall map. There wasn't last night. The curator should have consulted me before messing up my installation with gallery furniture. I hover in the doorway of *Myigration's* dedicated room, assuming he'll soon leave, his contemplation complete, or his reverie broken, so I can begin mine. But he doesn't budge.

Myigrations is a work through which I diverted spectacularly from my thesis objectives of researching relationships between minerals, mapping, mining, consumerism, and contemporary art. In summary, by delving into the artworks and writings of Robert Smithson, Alfredo Jaar, and the painters of the Yolgnu Bark Petitions, who protested bauxite mining on their ancestral lands around Yirrkala, I analysed how contemporary artists respond to mining and associated ecological and political issues.

But *Myigrations* summoned me. And it almost consumed me. There was no plan to make this massive collage—it emerged from deep within. I didn't have time to make it, but I did. It has no relevance to the thesis research question. A spectacular diversion at the 11th hour! The intensive process of meticulously cutting and then pasting small (3cm²) fragments of duplicate Pacific Ocean 1940s emergency edition military maps on a huge canvas exhausted me, physically and emotionally. In the end I could not bear to exclude the collage from this exhibition, so we built a dedicated room for it within the gallery. Looking around at my other works in the exhibition I realise *Myigrations* is an island, and an island about being an island.

The man's still occupying the bench! I tip toe past him and perch at the far end to scribble my thoughts. Minutes pass.

I'm baffled by his immersion. The curator clearly anticipated some viewers would welcome a seat. I peak at his profile. He could be in his late thirties. His long thin fingers clasped under a long thin face remind me of an El Greco painting. His eyes sweep across the collage, slowly, northwest to northeast, north to south. The rest of him doesn't move. I don't know what to make of this because most artworks are lucky to get a cursory glance.

He rises swiftly. Tripping over my words I blurt "what does this artwork mean to you?" I can't believe I said that!

I cringe with embarrassment. My throaty warbly question catches him mid-stride. For a second he hovers in the doorway, half in here, half out there.

Turning around slowly he walks right up to the collage and traces two small circles (first clockwise, then anticlockwise). Good on you, touching my work. Sharply craning his neck, he scans the upper reaches of the island archipelago. I'm impressed how *Myigrations* dwarfs him; in fact, I'm immensely pleased.

He ever so lightly strokes the surface of an island with the back of his left hand. She ripples in response.

My question still hangs between us. He takes so long to answer that I don't know where to look and so I stare at his feet. I gasp. He's wearing white running shoes! I recognise immediately he isn't local, but something of an import, possibly not unlike like me. Sighing heavily, he responds with an utterly predictable North American accent "homelessness", and after a lengthy pause "no permanent place".

No further words are exchanged between us. He didn't once look at me, but I have just been x-rayed one thousand times. I get up to stroke *Myigrations* too. In 'The futurist moment: Avant-garde, avant-guerre, and the language of rupture', Marjorie Perloff (1986) states '...what the collage-piece unravels from the surface of the canvas..., is after all, the flight coupon we thought we had lost' (xix).

Fat tears ricochet from my dusty red toes. Did you know our tears are salty like the oceans?

• • • • •



3 Nien Schwarz, *Myigrations* (1998–99) work-in-progress.

**11:00 am Boxing Day, Canberra, 1988, is also
20:00 Christmas Day, Ottawa, 1998**

The collage is taking ever so long. It's already Boxing Day. I am restless yet fixed to this spot.

I'm sitting on this canvas of about four-square meters. I made it by sewing together two lengths of calico. I've done my best to keep the stitching flat, yet there is a central suture, a spine. I like to touch that spine; it forms the backbone of this work that is intended to be the size of four meter long wall. I've done five hours today; repeatedly, carefully, choosing a square of blue map and delicately pasting it onto the cotton ground, just barely overlapping each one with its neighbours.

I shift every few minutes because my legs get in the way of my brush, or my feet fall asleep. I cross one leg, sometimes both. I tuck them beneath me. Later I stretch my ridiculously long legs straight out in front, and later yet lie curled on my side. Most of my life is spent living off the ground—in cars, chairs, beds, and at desks in boring institutional offices. I think of Aboriginal artists sitting on the ground, their ground, painting their ancestral origin stories, painting their relationships to specific places they are born with the responsibility to care for and to teach the next generation about.



4 Nien Schwarz, *Myigrations* (1998–99) work-in-progress.

Except for the occasional screeching of gang-gang and sulphur-crested cockatoos it is silent on campus. In Canada my family will be listening to Christmas carols on CBC FM, while a turkey roasts to golden perfection. Anneke will serve apple, sage and wild rice stuffing in an oval Wedgewood bowl, and homemade cranberry sauce in her mother's long-stemmed crystal bowl. Silverware glistens gold in candlelight. I hum *Silent Night* and lose myself in an endless sea of blue map fragments down under.

My mind is a spinning compass. With every few pieces I select and paste into place my mind zigzags the Equator, in between the accounts of early arctic explorers in the north and the south Poles whose journals I devoured as a child, and what I know of my family's history in France, Indonesia, The Netherlands and more recently Canada. In the late 17th century, my father's family were Huguenots. Persecuted in France they fled north to the Netherlands. How many thousands are dislocated every year by war and religious persecution?

I recall my mother's stories about the bomb shelter Opa built beneath her sand pit. It's a good thing he did because shrapnel landed in the kitchen. Her own mother repurposed scraps of cloth to make underwear and unravelled threadbare sweaters to knit bigger ones for her growing family. My fear of war galvanized my resolve to never to have children. I couldn't bear their fear and suffering.

I recall my mother's account of migrating to Canada by ship from Rotterdam in 1962, a city blitzed to nothing in her living memory. One night the crossing made her so seasick she lost hold of me. How many times has she told me how frightened she was that she had damaged me. And I'm not with her for Christmas this year.



5 Nien Schwarz, *Myigrations* (1998–99) work-in-progress.

A poster-sized picture-map of the world hangs above my childhood bed. The original was painted in watercolours for the oceans are translucent currents of cool blues and warmer turquoises. The map has a plain white border, which I imagine keeps Earth from spilling into space.

I can identify different countries and cultures through a smattering of iconic animals and people of different colours in different styles of dress. I see painted forests and mountain ranges,

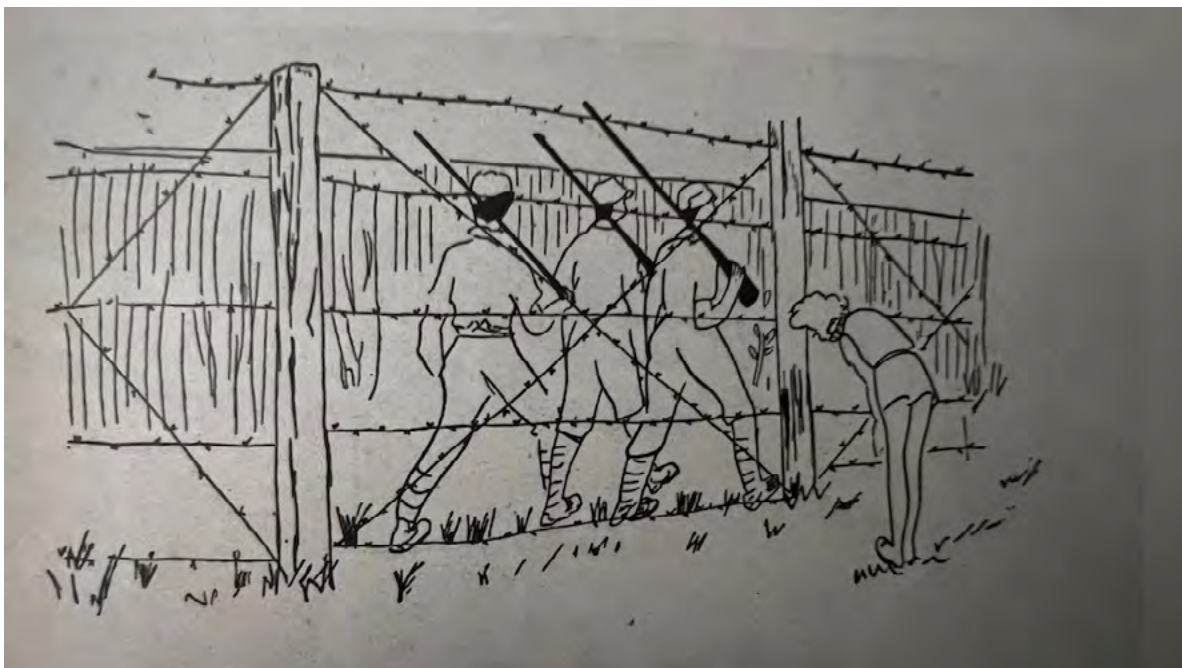
an igloo, a patterned tee pee and straw and mud huts. I search for a brick house on a hill overlooking a river.

Canada, our new home, is a vast, snow-and-tree covered expanse. Moose, beavers, wolves, and various kinds of bears are strung out across the land. It gives me great satisfaction to associate my adopted country with these majestic wild mammals.

I can't see anything marking my birthplace. Possibly it is too small to fit anything about it on this map, but really, there should be a windmill. My young heart knows it was not a Dutch artist who originally painted this map of the world.

From the vantage point of my homemade wooden bed, innumerable journeys take me across treeless deserts, through thick and thinning clouds, over polar and tropical seas. I circumambulate the North and South Poles. I never get tired of walking, and I'm always in my own company. Where there is water, I cross in a wooden boat with a single red sail.

My six-year-old self, standing on my bed, traces a watery route between The Netherlands, Indonesia, and Canada. I have an Indonesian grandmother, who claims to be Portuguese, but as she is my paternal grandfather's second wife, I have met her only twice. He was an ophthalmologist with the Dutch army and drafted by the Japanese army to work for them. I imagine him staring into the eyes of his captors. No wonder he sought comfort in the arms of an Indonesian nurse. I fantasise being on Java and join my future father Erik, his little brother Jaap, and my Oma Liesje (after whom I am named) to help them survive the Japanese prisoner of war hell camps created for impounding and terrorising colonial women and children.



6 Sketch by Mrs Vogelaar-Weber printed in *Het Verbluffende Kamp* by Ko Luijckx, 1945.

Papa and I often look at maps together. I beg Papa to share a memory of camp life. From a very young age I understand that some people inflict terrible cruelty on others. Sometimes Papa relents and tells me one of two stories.

One story goes along the lines of plugging fistfuls of dirt, and on one occasion a piece of fruit, far too rotten to eat, in the exhaust pipes of Japanese military jeeps. Watching the mess shoot out when the engines started was thrilling, he said. I smile, but inwardly shudder because I know it would have been terribly dangerous to get caught by humiliated armed men. The other story is about a dog collapsing from inhaling kneeheight volcanic gases, but that's all I remember. His silence arouses my curiosity and my imagination.

I fear a recurring nightmare. My father is in danger, and I try to save him. I'm running towards him, but the tall dark jungle always closes in, obscuring him from my view. By the time I get to where I saw him last, standing alone on a tiny wooden bench, he is gone. Gone forever.

It's too hot. The acrylic medium dries on my brush. Sweat mingles with tears. Papa, Indonesia, and the beloved picture map above my childhood bed slip away.



7 Nien Schwarz, *Myigrations* (1998–99) work-in-progress.



17:00 20 December 1998

What a cooker today! Very hot and humid followed by deafening rain. I can see another storm approaching over the crest of Black Mountain. I'm making good progress, only sixty percent left to do.

I recall my father and I liked to shop together. Sometimes Erik paused at small piles of exotic fruit. These foreign fruits looked bizarre and so out of place in a country regularly in the grip of minus degree temperatures and meters of snow. He carefully picks up some variety nameless to me.

Was this reverence, the oddly coloured, prickly, or pocked fruit sitting in his cupped hands? Then I see him, and I hate this vision, of *Papa* aged nine, with big ears, skinny legs, and swollen knees, ravenously devouring a slimy tropical fruit well past its prime. I can only imagine the three years of hunger he endured on Java. How many of his little friends and their mothers died around him when he was my age?



8 Photo printed in *Het Verbluffende Kamp* by Ko Luijckx, 1945. My grandmother's red note written in the margin reads "This could have been Erik, he looked precisely like this."

I don't like these exotic fruits that have been picked far too early, but I can never decline to share an overly bitter or sickly pungent sweet fruit. I say yes, out of respect, and secretly hoping he'll then share a different camp story. He never does though, only the two stories about stuffing the Japanese jeeps exhaust pipes with crap, and the dog collapsing from toxic volcanic fumes. He never talks about the 3 years in hell. Not even with Mama. My legs are falling asleep, and a breeze blows fragments of ocean maps out of my reach.

I'm having trouble piecing together the western shore of an island. I keep searching for an appropriate piece of map, I but can't find one. I put this island aside and start afresh, this time beginning with a northern edge.



9 The tent of our pilot, Dave. Northern Labrador coast, 1992. Geological Survey of Canada. Party chief: Martin van Kranendonk

July 1992

I'm not a real smoker. My first excuse for lighting up is that life up here is so incredibly healthy it just feels kind of good to do something unhealthy.

My second excuse is that smoke helps to keep mosquitoes away. This morning they were hitting the tent, loudly. I was almost fooled into putting on my rain-gear before emerging from my downy nest. Yesterday, with one slap of a big hand, we counted close to 100 mosquitoes!

Our pilot Dave told me about a couple who died last year after their canoe capsized on nearby river. I assumed they starved or died from hypothermia. I was wrong, they died from exposure to blood sucking insects!

Dave's story reminds me of 1981, my first summer working as a cook in the arctic. I was up near Qamani'tuaq, Nunavit taking a short cut back to camp because I was late heading back to make dinner for the crew. I had an air photo on which I had carefully plotted my new route back to camp. But the wind dropped, and a thick cloud of blood sucking insects enveloped me. For a few minutes I ran, trying to get away from them. It didn't work. The feasting on my fingers and face was frenzied. I got lost because I had trouble holding my air photo still long enough to

confirm my route back to camp. I lost time but I also a lot of energy thrashing about wildly and flooding my rubber boots with ice water. My temporary derangement really scared me.



10 Labrador coast, 1992.

I'm sitting quietly in the doorway of my canvas home - matching the stillness of an arctic summer day. There's not a breath of wind. Nothing is visibly moving. A distant gentle tinkling of crystal candle ice is the stuff of daydreams. My outstretched legs rest on gravel and lichen.

I have a third excuse for smoking. Although I hardly draw on the cigarettes, I nonetheless light one after the other. I am all ears and eyes, listening hard and scanning the horizon far and wide.

Across from me are breathtakingly beautiful aquamarine ice floes, glinting in the sun. This ice and island-studded expanse of sapphire-blue Arctic Ocean sweeps east towards Greenland. From the helicopter I can sometimes make out the distant shores of Baffin Island. I love this country. It is painfully beautiful. And, also very dangerous.

I have every reason to be afraid. As much as I hate guns the cold steel against my thigh is very reassuring. I would never attempt to kill, just to scare. For a moment I wish for safety on one of those islands, out there in the icy blue ocean, but there are polar bears out there too.

I chastise myself for my fear, but the memory of being charged by a grizzly bear ten years ago on a similar geological expedition is still fresh in my mind. And only 12 hours ago I felt the same as I did back then. At about 1:00 this morning our helicopter pilot woke up the camp with a blood-curdling cry. He's fine. But where is that polar bear now? While all the geologists are out there on their traverses mapping the geology, I am in camp, alone, with a freezer of meat. And I have my period.



11 Polar bear, Labrador coast, 1992.



18 December 1999 (my 7th wedding anniversary)

I can't find a square of the darkest turquoise and I really need a dark anchoring point in this last corner of this island. So far, I've used 110 topographic maps cut into 3 cm squares.

I think back to the previous two years and how every time I felt terribly out of sync with being in Australia, fragmented by the distance between here and my loved ones in Canada or Europe, I tore or cut maps into little squares. Then I'd join them together to form a new cloth, a tablecloth, a new kind of identity, an imaginary land.

I'm creating *Myigrations* from maps printed in 1944 for wartime distribution in Australia. These maps cause me to reflect on tensions between different parts of the world and my life-long utopian desire for no more war. I look at the emerging circle of broken islands, like steppingstones, and wish people would realise the many ways we are all connected.

I think back to my experiences of working with international artists in the National Gallery of Australia's 1996 exhibition, *Islands*. I delighted in exercising my French with Annette Messenger and Christian Boltanski. I assisted Thai artist Montien Boonma with constructing his heady herb and spice encrusted temple-like structure. Montien, his friends and Thai Embassy staff in Canberra introduced me to Buddhist principles and Buddhism in contemporary arts. I recoiled in horror at the first-hand experiences of Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar and his absolute disillusionment with the West and the United Nations for not preventing the highly preventable genocide in Rwanda. I was convinced Joseph Beuys' wartime experiences haunted his felt

pieces that we hung in the gallery. I mustered the courage to give Australian artist Lyndal Jones a hug, because she clearly needed one.



12 My tent, 1982, NWT Canada. Paul Hoffman Geological Survey Camp.

The intensity of making this collage echoes my immersion in the colouring of geological maps in the Canadian Arctic field camps. In the Arctic the intense and precise colouring of geological maps distracted me from worrying about roaming bears, feeling cold, the choking smoke from forest fires billowing in from the south, and the hordes of bloody mosquitoes and black flies. The process of making this collage is probably about escaping reality and collapsing distances by weaving together fragments of my past, the present and our future. In the process I'm finding what was lost, locating something new, or perceiving something hidden. Perloff states '... the collage can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner that is absolutely illimitable' (75).

In my studio I prominently display a postcard reproduction of Jan Vermeer's painting of *Woman Reading a letter*, 1663–64. During my many years of cooking along the fringes of arctic shorelines I yearned for the arrival of the mailbag dropped off by a plane every two - three weeks, along with supplies of food. I loved to receive a letter, someone else's thoughts I could absorb slowly, over, and over, in my own time. I think back to the thousands of letters I have written in the quiet moments of endless 24-hour daylight days, when icebergs twinkle in the distance, the oceans lie as flat as mirrors, islands and clouds impossible to separate from their reflections, and the momentary splash of a narwhale or walrus slicing through still waters spouting for air.

I try to explain in my letters what silence is like, and of my near silent excursions in the canoe, loving the feel of my hands and paddle slicing through freezing ocean, lake, and river waters.

I try to explain in my letters what it is like to be alone all day, in the so-called middle of nowhere. To wade into a river or lake with two galvanized buckets and repeatedly haul slushy water up to the kitchen tent. To cook for Earth scientists who also love their work here, and on their return to camp in the evenings, over dinner, endlessly discuss the formation and age of the Earth in billions of years and draw what they saw today on the plastic tablecloth.

In my letters I describe my joy at walking endless shorelines, in the tracks of bears and wolves and caribou, and at the interface of land and water where the Inuit people still draw sustenance. I tried to explain these things, but I know that unless you've been to this kind of place—where you are humbled by silence, the spirit of all things, and you're cognisant of not being invincible—you won't understand my letters, because they are slow and very detailed.

Perhaps in the recesses of my mind, I was trying to explain all these things to the woman in Vermeer's painting. I always felt a bit sorry for her in that she appeared to be excluded from the journeys of discovery unfolding on the map behind her. In *The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art* (1987) Svetlana Alpers writes, 'Geography of the land is probably to a large degree geography of the mind' (95).



13 Johannes Vermeer, *Woman Reading a Letter*, 1663–64.



14 #4. *Me as Liesje Schwarz*. Handwritten into *Het Verbluffende Kamp* by Ko Luijckx, 1945

I treasure a book handed down to me by my mother. It was written by a survivor of the Japanese prisoner of war camp in Java that my father endured with his mother and his little brother from 1942 to 1945. In the book is a photo of my grandmother. It's hard to make out, but I imagine she's wearing a floral-patterned dress because I remember she loved flowers.

I always meant to ask, but forgot, and then it was too late, what my father remembered of his journey from war-ravaged Indonesia to war-ravaged Europe and what kind of ship it was that carried him across so many lengths of ocean. My father's farewell to me was a sketch of a sailboat with a single red sail.

Contextualising statement

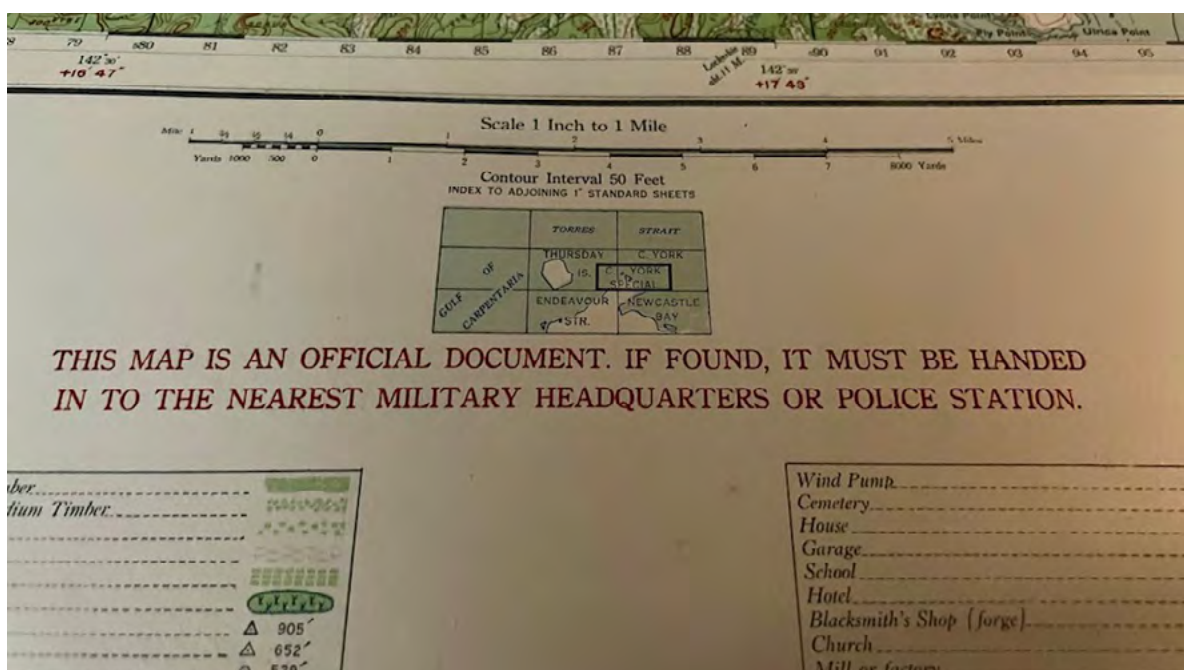
The final chapter of my PhD exegesis describes *Myigrations* as a 4m² wall map created from tiny squares of ocean maps. *Myigrations* the collage is inseparable from *Migrations* the creative essay I share here.

The essay begins by visiting the collage in my exhibition *Beyond Familiar Territory* the morning after the exhibition opened at the Canberra Museum & Gallery in February 1999. In reverse chronology *Migrations* recounts me making the collage at the Canberra School of Art over a three month period, and how my mind wandered widely during that period of intense slow making. Enrolled year-round, and unable to fly home to Canada for Christmas in 1998, I was alone and had the main sculpture studio to myself. I could spread out. And I did. The materiality of the collage and my homesickness prompted the collage and this accompanying essay.

The wall map was created from 170 duplicate topographic maps I rescued, along with hundreds of other maps, from the National Library of Australia's 1996 purge of paper assets. Many of the maps were printed in 1944 for war-time distribution in Australia. Some were printed as emergency editions with bright red text instructing to hand in to the nearest military headquarters or police station if found. The military contexts of the maps I used to create *Myigrations* are now infused with my family's war time memories and the psychological consequences we still live with.

My father, Erik, along with his mother Liesje Schwarz (nee Bolle) and his little brother Jaap, barely survived World War II internment camps on Java 1942–45, including Kampong Macassar. The camps were liberated when my father was age ten. His first opportunity to attend school was age eleven. He later specialised in geophysics. His fieldwork in northern and arctic Canada and his research publications contributed to understanding where rocks originated on Earth and how they moved via plate tectonics and polar wander paths.

As a young child I firmly believed that by the time I turned age thirty there would be no more war. My father survived the War by risking his life to steal food for his family from their captors.



He was my childhood hero. He also internalised the traumas of war, which challenged us all. I tried to protect him from himself, to comfort him, and to protect our family from his trauma. I didn't know the word empathy, but I practiced it well. Erik sought solace in nature. His riveting stories about conducting fieldwork on the shores of remote arctic shorelines enticed me to seek work up there too.

I was in my eighth year of cooking in the arctic when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I was exactly half his age when Erik died aged fifty-four. Ironically, his premature death liberated me to follow my own life-long dream of going to art school.

Twenty-four years have lapsed since I created *Myigrations* and wrote *Migrations*. I am seeking to share my essay artwork as a form of pacificism.

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About the author

Nien Schwarz is a visual artist working on Palawa Country in Lutruwita (Tasmania). She was the ANU Canberra School of Art's first doctoral candidate (1999) and subsequently taught sculpture and environmental art at Edith Cowan University (2000–2018), where she is currently an Honorary Senior Lecturer. Nien's participation in remote geoscience mapping expeditions, as a cook with the Geological Survey Precambrian Division across Canada's arctic (1981–92), and in Western Australia since 1993 as field assistant, underpin her multidisciplinary arts practice. Her works are infused with the ground beneath her feet, particularly sites associated with extractive economies and colonisation. Her eclectic practice spans constructed textiles, sculpture, print media, video, site-specific installations. She intends to provoke consideration of where we come from, where we are, who we are, what we've done and what will sustain us all into the future. Significant exhibitions include the *Indian Ocean Craft Triennial 2021*; *Japan and Australia Sculpture Exchange* (Gomboc Gallery, Choju Contemporary Art, Kyoto, Kaede Gallery, Osaka); *Dialogues with Landscapes* (UWA Perth Festival 2011); *Over My Shoulder* (2006 solo Perth Institute of Contemporary Art); *Promised Land* (2001 solo for the Perth International Arts Festival). Commissions include the Canberra Museum & Gallery lift and the Perth Core Library. She has written for *Artlink* and *Art Monthly Australia*.
